STRUCTURES, RELATIONSHIPS AND ATTITUDES: COALMINING FAMILY LIFE IN THE BLACK COUNTRY DURING THE SECOND HALF OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

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CONTENTS

Abstract

The aim of this Thesis is to describe and to analyse the structure of coalminer families and households in two working-class communities at two points in time in the second half of the nineteenth century. The methodology used is essentially that of comparison of coalminer households across time to look for elements of change and continuity, and comparison with the working-class generally with whom the coalminers lived to look for similarities and differences.

The critical review of the historiography presented in Chapter One shows that a certain mythology surrounds most aspects of coalmining as an occupation. Because of the special nature of coalmining as a job, coalminers developed a set of behavioural attitudes which dominated all aspects of their life, including marriage, the establishment of a home, the formation of families, the level of marital fertility, and the degree to which they shared their homes with co-residents. Some of these aspects of the historiography will be challenged in this Thesis.

Much of the mythology surrounding coalminers originated from those communities in which they were coterminous with the population and in which they had little contact with the outside world and therefore were little influenced by other behavioural attitudes and values. This isolated existence was not, however, the socio-economic context in which many coalminers lived and worked. In the Black Country, they lived in communities which they shared with the rest of the working class generally, and the size and importance of the coalminers as an occupational group varied in each community. This Thesis will describe and analyse the socio-economic structure of two Black Country communities which contained significantly different proportions of coalminers among the working-class population generally.

The analysis of the coalminer population in these two communities is presented in three Chapters which examine in turn the age and gender structure, the composition of the family and the household, and the extent and nature of co-residence within the coalminer household. In Lower Gornal where the coalminers were a substantial proportion of the population, they displayed in 1851 significant differences in their family and household structures to the rest of the working class population. These differences were, to a large extent, disappearing by 1891. In Cradley, however, where the coalminers were just one occupational group amongst many, in both 1851 and 1891, they shared the same family and household structure as the rest of the working class.

In Chapters Six and Seven some of the reasons for the differences and similarities in household structure, between the coalminers and the rest of the working class, are explored and some broad conclusions are drawn about coalminer demography.

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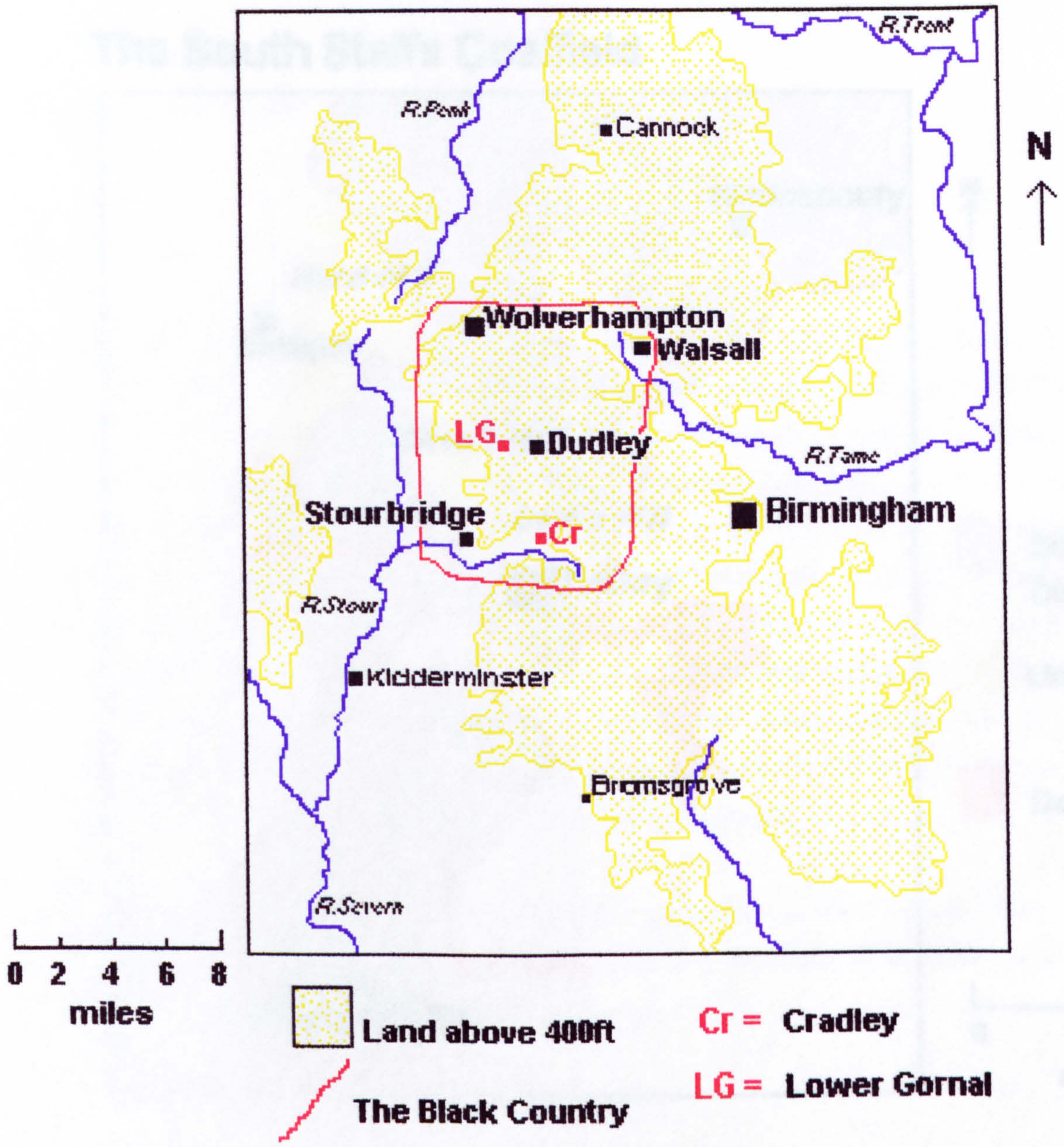

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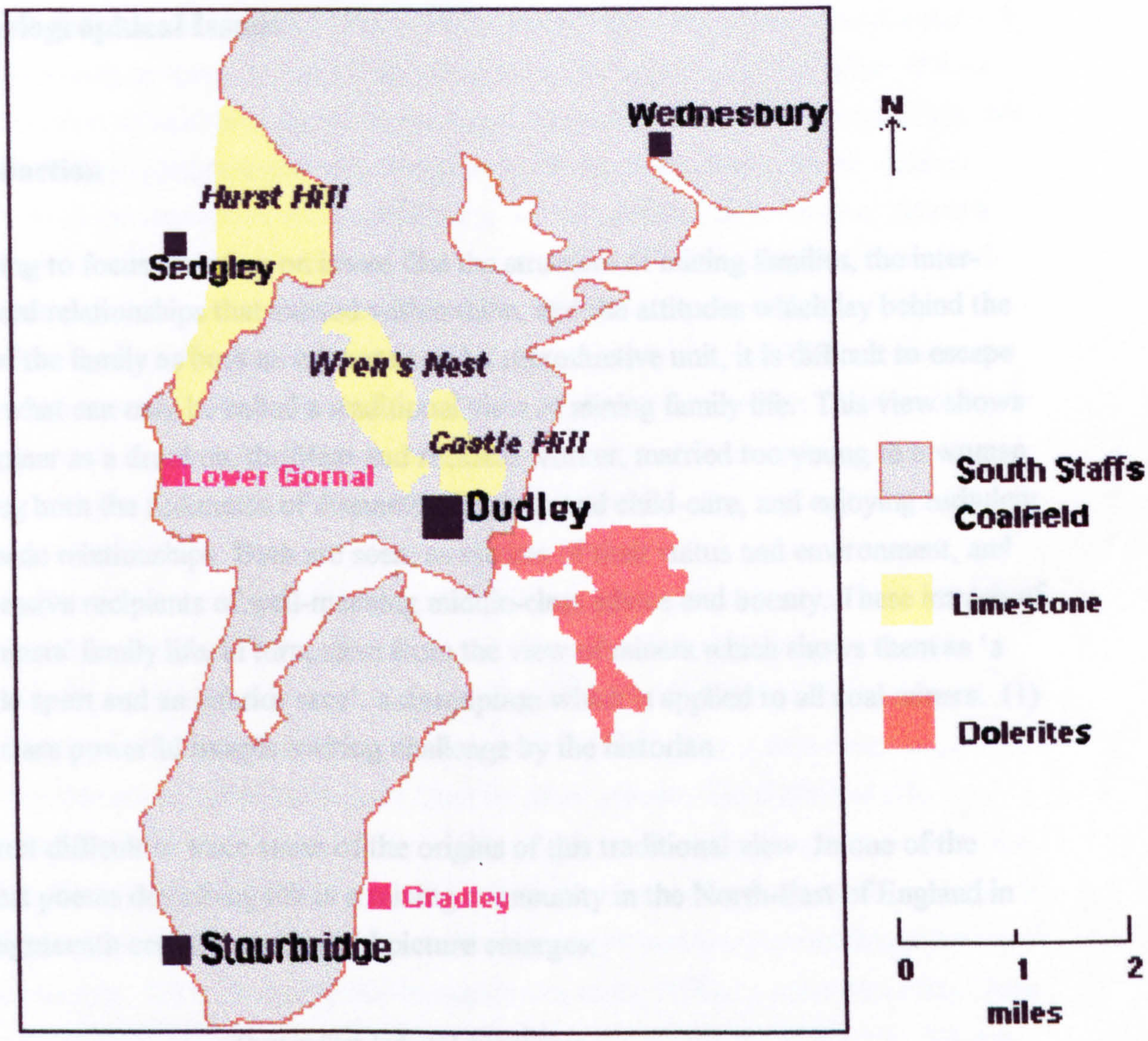
The South Staffs Coalfield



Sources: **R.H.Kinvig, J.G.Smith, M.J.Wise**, eds., *Birmingham and its Regional Setting, A Scientific Survey*, 1950, p.231 and Fig5 between pp.22-3
T.J.Raybould, *The Economic Emergence of the Black Country*, 1973, p.21

CHAPTER ONE

Historiographical Issues

Introduction

In trying to focus attention on issues like the structure of mining families, the inter-personal relationships that existed within them, and the attitudes which lay behind the role of the family as both an economic and a reproductive unit, it is difficult to escape from what can only be called a traditional view of mining family life. This view shows the miner as a drunken, thriftless and reckless worker, married too young to a woman lacking both the rudiments of domestic economy and child-care, and enjoying turbulent domestic relationships. Both are seen as victims of their status and environment, and the passive recipients of well-meaning middle-class advice and bounty. These images of the miners' family life, in turn, stem from the view of miners which shows them as 'a people apart and an inferior race': a description which is applied to all coal miners. (1) These are powerful images inviting challenge by the historian.

It is not difficult to trace some of the origins of this traditional view. In one of the earliest poems describing life in a mining community in the North-East of England in the eighteenth century, a colourful picture emerges:

Then collier lads got money fast
Had merry days while it did last;
Did feast and drink and game and play
And swore when they had naught to say.

They came to church but very rare,
Yet missed not when a bride was there,
But rested on the Sabbath day,
From everything but drink and play;

And thus the collier and their wives,
Lived drunken, honest working lives. (2)

In the nineteenth century, condemnation and criticism of miners is plentiful in the

literature of Parliamentary Reports, (3) and the sermons of Anglican clergymen. (4) These outbursts often sprang, it seemed, from a deep concern for the welfare of miners' families; for the damage to family life wrought by young mothers lacking domestic skills; for the harmful effects on the socialisation of children brought about by mothers having to return to work; for the destructive impact which drunken fathers could have on families already at the mercy of the precarious economic world in which they lived. These impressions of mining family life may indeed present an accurate picture from the standpoint of the observers, but they remain, nevertheless, pictures drawn by outsiders unable to see beyond their middle-class culture and values. Such views often say more about the observers than their objects. By the end of the nineteenth century the view had not changed substantially and middle-class observers like Lady Florence Bell portrayed miners as having large, uncared-for families, living in overcrowded houses, with insufficient financial resources due to drinking and bad management, and giving little, if any, thought to the future. (5)

This traditional view has proved extremely resilient in the twentieth century especially amongst those historians of mining trade unionism and its heroic struggle against exploitative capitalism. Frank Machin, writing in 1958 about the Yorkshire miners, largely accepts the view that in the character of the mining population there were special phenomena which set it apart from all other groups. He attributed this separateness to the special nature of the miner's job, to his living conditions and to the system of relationships within the industry; and thus the myths are perpetuated. (6) In the last twenty years, however, these myths have been increasingly challenged by historians from different theoretical backgrounds, using different methodologies. John Benson has challenged many of the myths associated with mining family life, (7) and has raised the profile of the family in the writing of social history in general. (8) From a different standpoint the writers of women's history, while not examining mining family life in particular, have forced all historians to focus in a new way on social phenomena in the past. (9) In forcing us to look at the events of the past, however imperfectly, through the eyes of the women who took part in those events, many traditional views have inevitably been challenged. The use of autobiographical evidence and oral reminiscence has also helped dispel some of the mythology associated with working-class family life. (10) Miners in particular, so Angela John maintains, have a *"rich and powerful tradition of appreciating the value of collective memory which they have used to counteract the official history written by the ruling class."* (11)

This forms the contextual background of the historiography which will be examined within the framework of the three themes to be developed in this thesis: the structure of mining families; the relationships which existed between the members of those families; and the attitudes which lay behind those relationships and roles and gave meaning and value to them; and the explanation of the connections between structure and relationships and attitudes. Within each of these themes, the historiography will be examined at three levels: the national overview; the regional view of the West Midlands; and the local view of the Black Country itself.

The Structure of Mining Families

The National Overview

Few historians have concerned themselves specifically with the structure of mining families, in terms of size and composition. Some have, however, examined issues concerning the nature of mining communities and the quality of life in such communities, which had important implications for the structure of mining families and households.

Mining historians like A R Griffin have largely accepted the impressionistic evidence of the nineteenth century when writing about mining communities. He believes that large scale in-migration into the Yorkshire mining villages in the nineteenth century had produced "frontier" towns where men outnumbered women. This in turn led to boisterous conduct amongst the miners, with *"gambling, heavy-drinking and prostitution being common features."* (12) Marriage in such communities, where men outnumbered women and where the men were earning relatively high wages at an early age, must have been at an early age, and the more flexible relationships associated with 'living in sin' must have been fairly common. (13)

As well as affecting the pattern and incidence of marriage, the migratory nature of the population in mining communities also affected the structure of mining households in other ways. Coupled with a general shortage of houses, this migratory population made the sharing of houses inevitable. (14) At Moira, where the earl of Moira had erected for his miners in 1811 what must have been model dwellings for the time, there was by 1851 widespread overcrowding: 18.4% of these houses having shared occupancy; those households without lodgers containing an average of 5.9 occupants;

and those with lodgers having an average of 7.6 occupants, sharing five rooms of which only two were bedrooms. (15) Griffin presents no evidence as to the degree to which sharing was involuntary, in the sense that the lodgers were relatives and that duty to family was paramount; or voluntary, reflecting hard times during which hard-pressed wives actively sought lodgers to boost household income. The motives lying behind this shared occupancy, whether having their origins in kinship obligations or the need to survive, are important for the historian examining the connection between family structure and relationships.

Griffin did link the lack of comfort in the miners' overcrowded houses with the problems of drinking and gambling in the mining communities he examined. In the absence of other forms of entertainment the public house offered modest comfort in comparison with the miners' homes. In the company of their workmates, they could stretch out a little and hear the news and while some miners drank within limits, many drank more than was good for them and fighting and quarrelling resulted. (16) In the public house gambling was also rife and miners would bet on almost anything from individual strength to dog and cock fights despite the efforts of the authorities to stamp out such practices. (17) Such drinking and gambling had devastating effects on many miners' families where hardships caused by over-indulgence tested relationships between husbands and wives to breaking point and soured those between parents and children. In such families domestic quarrelling and violence must have been commonplace.

Alan Campbell found similar problems caused by in-migration into the Lanarkshire coalfield. Sheer weight of numbers coupled with inadequate housing meant that existing communities were incapable of absorbing the migrant population, both in terms of housing them and in providing those social institutions deemed so necessary for civilised community life by nineteenth century reformers. (18) The imbalance in the sex-ratio caused by the in-migration of young miners and the problem of inadequate or non-existent accommodation must have had important implications for both nuptiality and fertility in mining households. Campbell's analysis of the 1861 Census Enumerators' Books shows that over one-third of the miners in the two communities investigated were between the ages of fifteen and twenty-four. In one of the communities studied, Coatbridge, 9.2% of the miners who married between 1855 and 1875 were under twenty and 60% were married between the ages of twenty and twenty-four. It comes as little surprise to find that in the two communities examined, Coatbridge and Larkhall, the average age at first marriage of miners was as low as 23.3 and 23.2 respectively. (19) While Campbell says nothing directly about fertility, he

did find that few miners' wives worked in paid employment outside the home despite opportunities for female employment. (20) This would fit with the pattern of high fertility in mining families where, after marriage, the large majority of wives were wholly occupied with domestic duties; child-rearing being perhaps the most important of these.

The need to give quantitative substance to impresssionistic evidence about the structure of coalmining families was felt very strongly in the 1970's, and two social historians in particular made major contributions to the debate concerning nuptiality and fertility in coalmining families. As a contribution to the analysis of the demographic transition taking place in the second half of the nineteenth century, Dov Friedlander focussed attention on the coalmining population, which formed 10%-15% of the total population. (21) More specifically, he focussed on three counties, Glamorganshire, Monmouthshire and Durham, where he assumed that the principal occupation was coalmining and, using earlier research of T.A.Welton and D.V.Glass, (22) as well as available Census data, (23) he examined age of marriage, fertility rates and the levels of female participation in paid employment. Friedlander's reworking of the Welton and Glass data showed that among the coalmining population marriage was early and fertility high, and this fertility difference reached its maximum after 1891, when the average number of children born to women in the coalmining counties was more than one child greater than in the rest of the country. (24) In these counties the high level of nuptiality and fertility was also matched by a higher level of child mortality than the rest of the country. The 1911 Census data confirmed this difference in fertility between mining families and that in the rest of the population. The average number of children born to Glamorganshire coalminers' wives who had been married between 20-25 years in 1911, was 6.81. This figure compares with an average of 5.82 children born to all other women. (25) Thus, assuming that Glamorganshire was a 'typical' mining county, the average number of children per woman in the coalmining counties was one child greater than in the rest of the country. Friedlander's analysis of the 1911 Census data also showed that between 71% and 74% of women under forty-five got married under the age of twenty-five among coalminers' families, compared with between 50% and 58% in the rest of the population. (26)

These occupational fertility and nuptiality differentials highlighted by Friedlander were also examined by Michael Haines in 1977 as part of a wider study of general occupational fertility differentials. He chose to study coalminers not only because of their economic importance as primary producers, but also because they formed a substantial proportion of the population and were frequently geographically highly

concentrated. Like Friedlander, Haines believed that the lack of demographic information about specific occupational groups could be compensated for by using that from small areas where there were high concentrations of particular occupational groups like coalminers. Most important of all for Haines was the fact that coalminers had been observed to have relatively high fertility. (27) Again like Friedlander, Haines reworked the 1911 Census of Marriage and Fertility data looking at the differences between the socio-economic classes and between individual occupational groups. He found that not only did miners have large families but also that the occupational fertility differentials were widening, and coalminers especially were lagging behind in the general fall in fertility. (28) For miners' wives over forty-five in 1911 the number of children born was 6.3, and even higher, at 6.52, for those married to coalface workers. (29) Even after allowance is made for child mortality, age of marriage and duration of marriage, miners' wives still had 4.46 children surviving (4.62 for those married to coalface workers), ranking only behind wives of agricultural labourers, blast-furnace workers and iron miners. (30)

Haines' data can also be used to make some interesting comparisons between classes of workers. The number of children born to miners' wives (socio-economic class VII) aged over forty-five in 1911 was 6.26, compared with 5.33 to wives of unskilled manual labourers (class V), and 5.04 to wives of skilled manual labourers (class III). In other words, miners' wives had on average about one child more than the wives of unskilled manual labourers. However, when the numbers of children born to these wives, and who actually survived, is examined, the figures are 4.45 for miners' wives, 3.88 for wives of unskilled manual labourers, and 3.82 for wives of skilled manual labourers. In other words, the higher level of child mortality among miners' families reduces, what Haines calls "the effective fertility" differential to about half a child. (31) It is important, however, to remember that socio-economic class VII represents all miners, not just coalminers, while class V was something of a `catch-all' category. Moreover none of this fertility data tells us how many children were actually living with parents at any point in time ,whether there were any changes over time in household structure, or whether there were differences between areas with different economic characteristics.

Haines also found different marriage practices associated with different occupations: mean age of first marriage for miners and their wives being the lowest of the nine occupations examined by the Registrar General in 1884-5. While the miners' mean age of marriage at 24.06 is only marginally lower than the next category of textile workers, at 24.38, their wives had a mean age of marriage of 22.46 compared with 23.43 for

wives of textile workers. (32) Women who married miners did so on average a whole year younger than those marrying men in other occupations: miners' brides were young.

The broad issues of nuptiality and fertility in the second half of the nineteenth century are dealt with by a wide range of historians from different theoretical backgrounds and using different methodological approaches to working-class history. This research confirms much of the Friedlander/Haines data, extends it along specific lines and also challenges the uses which can be made of it. R.B.Outhwaite writing in1973 drew attention to the fact that there were very few references to the mean age of marriage of the population in general before 1867 when the series became continuous. He argued that this makes it difficult to see trends and also to make comparisons between occupational groups: while there was undoubtedly variation in age of marriage, the direction of this change also varied between localities and between sexes in the same locality, and consequently there were important differences in marriage ages between communities at any point in time. Outhwaite warns that any *"temptation to generalise from this scanty and assorted collection ought to be resisted"*. (33) He is undoubtedly being over-cautious in his warning, being concerned about those historians who would seek to construct long-term trends based on a time-series with the shakiest of foundations. Using a different research route to Michael Haines, he arrived at the same figures for mean age of first marriage for miners and their wives in the 1880's of 24.06 and 22.46 respectively. (34) He does, however, point out that it is not always easy to isolate homogeneous occupational groups with common employment characteristics or to test the influence of their employment on the age of marriage. (35) It may be a dubious practice, leading to gross simplification and generalisation, for historians to groups all miners together and assume they are a homogeneous group for whom they can extract and manipulate socially relevant data, and about whom they can then make inferences concerning their personal and social relationships.

Indeed, Rosalind Mitchinson maintains that there is evidence of both local and regional variation in the frequency of early marriage. She shows that for the age group of 20-24 year old women, the nuptiality rate per 1000 females fell from 336 in 1861 to 274 in 1901. (36) By the late nineteenth century the normal age of marriage for most women was late and getting later. She also concurs with the widely-held view that marital fertility was falling after 1870. By comparing late nineteenth century fertility rates with those from communities where there were no restrictions on fertility at all, she concludes that the fertility rates of the 1870's were perhaps only 70% of those

possible. Therefore there must have been some form of deliberate limitation of family size being practised as early as the 1870's. (37) However, the miners were an exception to this generally falling fertility, since her analysis of the 1911 Census data shows the now-familiar picture of high fertility amongst coalminers. (38) Jane Lewis maintains that marriage was the typical experience for most women in the late nineteenth century with 87.7% of women in the age group 45-49 being married in 1881. (39) Elizabeth Roberts, using oral evidence from the north-west of England from 1890 onwards, confirms this view that marriage was a *'normal'* social experience for the vast majority of women. She also agrees that family size was falling by the end of the nineteenth century but admits that oral evidence is not very helpful in explaining why this was happening. (40)

The work of Ellen Ross on a poor area of London like Bethnal Green confirms this picture. Babies began to be born soon after marriage and continued until middle-age. However, of those women who had married in the 1860's, 63% had five or more children, whereas of those marrying in 1925, only 12.3% had five or more children. She maintains that while fertility was falling for all social classes from the 1880's, it was delayed in poor areas until the inter-war period, the most likely causal factor being the socio-economic structure of these areas. In Bethnal Green in 1881 the fertility rate for married women aged 15-44 was 313 births per 1000 women compared with the national figure of 286 births. (41)

The Floud and McCloskey data concerning fertility shows a steadily falling rate from 1870 which cannot be explained in terms of falling marriage rates or a decline in illegitimacy. Floud and McCloskey seek to show that age of marriage was rising and that married couples had fewer children, not by delaying the birth of the first child but by restricting births once the desired family size was reached. While the skilled worker on average had reduced his completed family size by 21%, between 1851 and 1881, even the miner had reduced his by 10%. (42) This issue of the deliberate restriction of family size by the working class in the late nineteenth century was taken up by J.A.Banks as part of a wider examination of Victorian values and how they were transmitted from one social class to another. He sees the delayed reduction in fertility in those areas where female employment was low as proof that reduction in family size was not due to the economic rationality of working-class housewives: since these are the very areas where one would expect wives to deliberately restrict family size to a level at which they could be adequately maintained. (43) This argument of course applies to mining areas where opportunities for women to work were said to be restricted and where reduction in family size did lag behind the rest of the population.

Tilly and Scott argue that high fertility in some areas was a reflection of the age structure of the population where there were many young families with children rather than more children per couple. A concentration of these families in certain areas may have led observers to believe that fertility was high without taking into account the fact that the population was also very young. (44) It may have been an unusually young population coupled with a lot of opportunity for work which gave the impression that fertility was remaining high in certain areas.

John Benson, in an attempt to show that nineteenth century miners were not necessarily irresponsible in their social behaviour, also plays down the evidence that miners married early by drawing attention to those groups of the working class who married at similarly early ages like textile workers, shoemakers, tailors and general labourers. He is equally scathing of the use of the 1911 Census of Marriage and Fertility which showed that miners did have above-average fertility. He points out that other groups of workers like building labourers, iron and steel workers, and agricultural labourers had even more children. He also stresses that a *"more sensitive indicator of pressure on the family economy"* is not fertility, but the number of children actually dependent on a miner. Using the mines' inspectors' reports and the records of the miners' permanent relief funds, he concludes that by 1850 most mining couples had about two and a half children under thirteen to look after and that by 1900 this had fallen to less than two children per couple. What overcrowding there was in miners' homes was caused by the overall smallness of the accommodation aggravated by the practice of taking in lodgers, and the contemporary view that mining communities contained large numbers of children was true only in the sense that they also contained a disproportionate number of young families. (45)

Although it is not about coalminers, no critical review of the historiography of family structure in the nineteenth century can ignore the work of Michael Anderson on Lancashire families, or more particularly, his analysis of the Census data for Preston in 1851 and his explanation of the social relationships revealed in this data. His choice of a Lancashire cotton town in the mid-nineteenth century, in economic development somewhere between rural pre-industrial England and urbanised, industrial, capitalist England, is relevant to a study of the Black Country. They both suffered the effects of trade cycles and overcrowding; there were large families struggling on low wages; there was little provision of social security for the old, sick and unemployed; and average family size and mortality were both high. (46) Anderson found that as many as 10% of households in Preston were shared by two or more families, and this sharing

was practised by families of all sizes, a feature one might expect in an area with a high level of in-migration. Average household size was 5.4, compared to the national figure of 4.8 in 1851. A large proportion of these households (23%) had more than just a nuclear two-generational family since they contained other kin such as nieces, nephews, grandchildren, married children and lodgers. (47) His analysis of family composition shows, however, that nuclear family-based residence was the norm in the mid-nineteenth century with 2.5 children per family, which Anderson considers to be high given the prevailing high level of mortality. When an average of 1.7 parents are added to this it gives a nuclear family size of 4.2 (48)

In this debate concerning delayed marriages and falling fertility at the end of the nineteenth century, and amidst the sometimes overwhelming mass of data presented in a bewildering variety of forms to substantiate the arguments, it is important not to lose sight of what P.E.H.Hair considers to be the most important feature of family life in the second half of the nineteenth century: that there were more large families and that a long and relatively stable family life had become the norm during the Victorian period (49) This changing structure must have had important and powerful influences on both relationships within the family, and on the attitudes to family life which determined and governed those relationships and which in turn were altered and refined themselves by the very nature of those relationships.

A Regional View: The West Midlands

In recent years much of the data concerning the structure of mining households and families has been both corroborated and contradicted by local studies of nineteenth century mining communities in what could loosely be described as the West Midlands. These local studies have both confirmed and challenged many of what were previously referred to as "traditional views" about mining family life. Ruth Crofts worked on the Census data of 1851, 1861 and 1881 for Madeley in Shropshire, where miners made up about 40% of the population. Her data showing age-structure in 1851, with 64.9% of the sample population being under thirty, confirms what Friedlander maintained was a typical characteristic of mining communities in the nineteenth century. (50) Both Friedlander and Haines had suggested that mining communities showed a serious imbalance in the male-female sex-ratio resulting from in-migration, but Crofts found little evidence of in-migration in Madeley, and the sex-ratio there in 1851 was 105:100, and by 1881 females outnumbered males with a ratio of 99:100. (51) She eschews

attempts to calculate age of marriage from the Census data but suggests that the age of miners' wives at the birth of the oldest child present in the home was above that of both ironworkers' and china-makers' wives: her figure of 25.84 is close to the national average in 1851 and considerably higher than Haines' figure of 22.46. (52) Most surprising of all, Crofts' data concerning size of families shows that miners in Madeley did not have the largest families with an average of 2.83 children. Both ironworkers and china workers had larger families, with 2.87 and 2.93 children respectively. She does admit, however, that these three occupational groups did have an average of 0.5 children more per family than the rest of the population in Madeley in 1851. (53) Household size for miners emerged as 5.4 persons in 1851 and by 1881 had altered little at 5.3 persons. Analysis of household structure showed that a large number of mining households, 35.4%, contained more than a two-generational nuclear family. Although this figure had fallen to 29% by 1881, Crofts' Madeley data in both years shows much higher figures of complex households than Anderson's figure of 23% for Preston households in 1851. (54)

Edward Billington, working on the Census data for Silverdale in North Staffordshire between 1841 and 1881, arrived at similar conclusions to Ruth Crofts. The quantifiable demographic characteristics of miners' households were similar to those of the rest of the settlement in which they lived: the miners did not have significantly larger households than the rest of the working-class population with a figure of 5.4 in 1881. (55) If there is a broad correlation between household size and family size then Silverdale does not conform to the models of Friedlander or Haines which are based on miners having large families. The age structure of lodgers in Silverdale is also inconsistent with there being migrants coming into the area in search of work, unlike the Haines' model which supports the idea of young adult males migrating into a mining community in search of work and requiring accommodation. Nor was there any mass migration of agricultural workers to the mining industry since the migration into Silverdale was of skilled men from developed areas. While there was a consistently higher proportion of males to females, it was not a major imbalance. (56)

Mary Mills, in an attempt to dispel the traditional stereotype of the nineteenth century miner's wife, has compared the demographic characteristics of two mining settlements with distinct economic structures:Cannock, an older settlement, and Chasetown, a more "frontier" type of settlement in the second half of the nineteenth century. In both the communities studied, miners and their wives married very young: in Cannock the average ages for miners and their wives were 24.06 and 21.93; and in Chasetown the averages were 23.32 and 21.01. In Chasetown there was a significant proportion of

girls under twenty marrying miners. (57) This data is in line with that of Michael Haines for miners nationwide discussed earlier. Like Crofts' data for Madeley, that for Cannock and Chasetown shows a very young population but, unlike Madeley, there was a significant imbalance in the sex-ratio in the mining population. In Cannock it was 106.7:100 and in Chasetown it was 114.09:100. An examination of the ratio in the 16-30 age group shows an even more striking imbalance, standing at 132.83:100 in Cannock and 163.55:100 in Chasetown, with a distinct lack of females in this age group. (58)

While this data concerning age of marriage and sex-ratio appears to confirm previous studies, that concerning family and household size does not. Using the catch-all category of "houseful", as devised by the Cambridge Group to mean all those resident in a household, Cannock had an average household size of 5.02 and Chasetown one of 5.31. (59) Two-generational nuclear family size was 4.74 and 4.8 in the two communities and these families contained 2.78 and 2.8 children respectively. These average family sizes among the mining population are considerably lower than those calculated by Haines for the mining population as a whole and more on a par with those for Madeley. Mills dismisses child mortality as a significant factor in reducing family size among miners since the figures for the area are no higher than the national averages for the period. This leads her to draw the conclusion that, contrary to the accepted stereotype, mining families were moving towards smaller family sizes at least as quickly as other groups. (60)

Thus, this regional view of mining family structure from the West Midlands, limited though it is, does in some respects challenge the national overview. It shows a much more complex structure both in those communities where miners predominated and amongst mining families themselves, and certainly challenges such generalisations that miners always married young and had large families, even if it does not erode such views completely.

The Black Country

Very little work has been done on the family structure either of specific occupational groups or in specific areas of the Black Country where certain occupational groups, like miners, predominated. The demographic data and analysis that does exist tends to give a picture for the whole of the Black Country which had a population of 362,212 in 1851 rising to 671,009 in 1901. (61) However, within the area there was a diverse range of communities with different rates of demographic and economic growth,

different degrees of geographical and social isolation, different occupational structures and different patterns of working, and different cultural norms. Generalisation is therefore fraught with danger.

For the area as a whole there was no great imbalance in the sex-ratio throughout the period: in 1861 there were 103 males for every 100 females and in 1901 there was parity between the sexes. (62) These figures may of course hide a considerable degree of variation between different areas of the Black Country where different occupational groups predominated and where patterns of working were different. It would also be interesting to know whether there was any significant imbalance in the important age-group 15-30 since most people married between these ages.

Like those areas of the West Midlands discussed above, the Black Country also had a young population in the middle of the nineteenth century with 66.4% being under 30 in 1861. (63) Closer analysis of the 0-15 age group shows that it was declining as a proportion of the total population, its share falling from 48.9% in 1861 to 36% in 1901. The Black Country almost certainly shared the general fall in fertility and family size which was a marked feature of the demographic development of the country as a whole at the end of the nineteenth century. Again, these figures hide any differences that may have existed between individual areas or occupations and they shed little light on the issue of whether miners were lagging behind other groups of workers in reducing the size of their families.

George Barnsby used the 1861 Census to provide data about the age of marriage and he concluded that it was not at an early age generally in the Black Country. By the age of 25 only 21% of the population was married and the data seems to show that most people married between the ages of 25 and 35, and even by this age only 47% of those who could have married had in fact done so. (64) It is difficult to draw any conclusions from these figures since it is impossible to find any similarly compiled national figures with which to compare them. Those historians like Rosalind Mitchinson and Jane Lewis who have worked on marriage rates amongst women in the nineteenth century found much higher rates of marriage: Mitchinson found that in 1861 in the 20-24 age group, 336 women per 1000 were married; and Lewis found that 87.7% of women aged between 45 and 49 were married in 1881. (65) Although no strict comparison can be made here because of the different methods of analysing the data, these figures for rates of marriage among women nationally in the late nineteenth century would seem to indicate a greater degree of nuptiality than Barnsby found in the Black Country.

Barnsby also used the 1861 Census to analyse the extent of migration into the Black Country. His data for Wolverhampton shows that 70% of the population came from Staffordshire and a further 16.8% from the neighbouring counties of Shropshire, Worcestershire and Warwickshire. Barnsby assumed that these migrants into the Wolverhampton area were miners and iron workers, either moving from one coalfield to another in the case of the Shropshire migrants, or moving within the same coalfield from one Black Country town to another. (66) This pattern of migration was also observed by R.Lawton who maintained that the immigrants into the Black Country and Birmingham district, amounting to 27.1% of the population in 1861, represented a *"short range drift of population"*. (67) He goes on to describe this movement as one from country to town and stresses the fundamental significance of such movement. (68) Barnsby, however, found little evidence of large scale in- migration from rural areas and thus an essential element of the Friedlander-Haines thesis, that coal mining areas had a high level of in-migration, was apparently, largely missing from the Black Country. Barnsby attempted to support this view by suggesting that most in-migration was by families rather than by individuals since there were 89 female for every 100 male migrants aged over 20. (69) However, this data can be interpreted in different ways. It could be construed as a serious imbalance in the sex-ratio of migrants with the surplus males having a significant impact on marriage patterns in the communities into which they migrated. On the other hand, the number of migrants involved is such a small proportion of the total population that their impact might only have been marginal. Until the age-structure of this migrant population is known any conclusions about their impact must be tentative at best. Barnsby's conclusion that such migration was not of a casual nature and that these migrants intended to stay, at the very least, stretches the available evidence.

Barnsby says very little about fertility or family size. The crude birth-rate in the Black Country in 1851 was 46.0, compared to 34.2 for England and Wales, and in those Black Country areas associated with mining like Tipton, Sedgley and Dudley, it was even higher. (70) Whether such high rates of fertility generated large family sizes for certain sections of the population is not known, although Barnsby does produce an average family size of five from the 1831 Census data. The usefulness of such a figure, of course, will depend on the criteria used in the various Censuses to define exactly what constituted a household, with the additional problem of identifying the nuclear family within it.

Little work has been done yet on individual communities within the Black Country. David Latham has examined the in-migration pattern between 1851 and 1881 for Lower Gornal and Gornal Wood in his wider study of religious practice in the area. He found that in 1851 87.3% of the inhabitants of Lower Gornal and Gornal Wood had been born there and 93.9% of them had been born within five miles. (71) Again, such evidence does not accord with the Friedlander-Haines thesis in which a high level of in-migration is essential to explain early marriage and consequent high fertility in mining families.

Earlier research by the present author into mining family structure, again using the relatively isolated community of Lower Gornal as the *'mining community'*, revealed some interesting variations on what by now are becoming familiar themes. Like miners elsewhere, those in Lower Gornal in the second half of the nineteenth century were fond of young brides. The mean ages of marriage derived from the Census, of 26.1 and 24.0 for miners and their wives respectively, show close similarity with those produced by Outhwaite for miners nationwide, while those derived from the marriage registers show even earlier ages of marriage than these. None of the Lower Gornal figures, however, show an age of marriage as early as 21.0 for wives which Mary Mills found in Chasetown in 1881. Were the miners lagging behind other working class groups in delaying marriage in 1881? The evidence here is not so conclusive since the data compiled from the marriage registers shows that miners did marry earlier than their working-class counterparts, while the Census data shows a marked similarity between the two. This disparity may simply reflect the different methodology of data collection and analysis used for different sources. However, there is no conclusive evidence from the marriage registers that miners were marrying later even by 1900, thus confirming that there was some kind of lag-factor operating which meant that miners continued to display certain demographic characteristics much longer than the rest of the population. However, the rest of the working-class population on Lower Gornal did not show any signs of delayed marriage either by 1900. The miners of Lower Gornal were no different from the rest of the community in which they lived in this aspect of their lives: they were all marrying relatively early in 1900 just as their fathers and grandfathers had done earlier in the century. (72)

Data compiled by the present author from the Census for Lower Gornal in 1881 shows reasonably clearly that miners' wives were more fertile than other working-class wives at this time. Both family size and the number of children per family were also higher than among the rest of the working-class population with whom the miners lived. Moreover, the Lower Gornal miners had larger families than the miners of Madeley in

1851 and Cannock Chase in particular in 1881. In Cannock Chase they did not emerge as a distinctive demographic group, but display similar fertility characteristics to other occupational groups, although they were marrying at an earlier age. The data for miners in Lower Gornal in 1881 does confirm the traditional view that not only did miners marry relatively early, but they also had more children. (73)

A significant proportion of mining households in Lower Gornal in 1881 also contained persons other than the two-generational nuclear family: 13.3% containing kin of the head of the household, and 11.6% containing lodgers, a group which varied from single persons to whole nuclear families sharing the house with the head and his family. (74) This data shares similarities with that of Michael Anderson for Preston in 1851 where, although nuclear families were the norm, there were significant numbers of relatives and lodgers sharing houses with these nuclear families. (75)

Thus the Black Country mining community of Lower Gornal in 1881 did share certain demographic characteristics with other regional communities like Madeley and Cannock Chase, while at the same time it also exhibited certain discrete features. The West Midlands region in turn shares characteristics with the national coalmining picture, if such a thing exists, based, as it is, on smaller views drawn from individual coalfields. It is part of the purpose of this thesis to see, by reference to two communities, if something approximating to a particular Black Country pattern of mining family structure is identifiable; and whether this, in turn, necessitates modification of what was characterised earlier as the traditional view.

Relationships and Attitudes

The National Overview

If the historiography of working-class family structure is dense, often contradictory, and fraught with the problems of interpretation which accompany all attempts to quantify social data, then that of the relationships and attitudes within the family is transparent and lightweight in its relative superficiality, and in many areas, by its virtual non-existence. This does not mean, however, that the existing study of family

relationships is problem-free since the lack of hard evidence compels historians to adopt new methods of interpreting the sources and advises them to make only the most tentative inferences from the data. The danger of adopting a too simplistic methodology, which assumes that structure and relationships are causally connected, has been addresssed from the sociologists' point of view by T.K.Hareven. She warns of drawing too many conclusions from change, or lack of it, in family structure over time. While the structure of the western family may have changed very little, the functions may have changed considerably. As these functions change with the wider changes in social structure generally, this will inevitably affect family relationships, but we can never really know whether families in the past were aware of these changes since the evidence is likely to be elusive and contradictory. Moreover, Hareven also asks whether families should ever be studied independently of the extensive kinship networks of which they were part. (76)

While this view may serve as a warning to all historians trying to link change and cause in the past, the special problems of interpreting evidence about working-class family relationships have, indeed, been highlighted by social historians too. John Benson admits that the sources are elusive and open to different interpretations and follows J.W.Weeks in warning that because working-class relationships were different in kind to those of the better-documented middle-class, they were not necessarily different in quality. (77) However, Benson does argue with confidence that the years after 1850 saw important changes in working-class family life with the emergence of *"smaller, healthier, more prosperous and more inward-looking"* families, and that these changes in turn led to improvements in the quality of personal relationships. (78) He pursues two aspects of this improvement: the changes in the pattern of working-class courtship and sexual relations, and the emergence of a growing sense of companionship within working-class marriages. (79) On the former the evidence is virtually non-existent and while the historian may, or may not, have considerable sympathy for Edward Shorter's thesis that rising illegitimacy between 1750 and 1850 proves that sexual relations were becoming more intense and satisfying, he should still remain sceptical. The notion that an increase in *"hit-and-run illegitimacy"* meant more sex and that this amounted to a genuine liberation from 'manipulative' to 'expressive' sexual behaviour seems, at face value, to be somewhat simplistic, although there may be some truth in it. (80) On the second aspect, that working-class family relationships were becoming more companionable, Benson is largely dependent on oral evidence. At the earliest this evidence dates from the last years of the nineteenth century, while the vast bulk of it refers to the early part of the twentieth century up to the pioneering social surveys of J.M.Mogey in Oxford and M.Young and P.Willmott in London in the 1950's. (81)

This evidence is notoriously difficult to interpret; it is often contradictory; and on sensitive issues like family relationships it gives but fleeting glimpses to tease the historian.

Such evidence from Lancashire for the years after 1890 led Elizabeth Roberts to the conclusion that most women had an unromantic view of their marriages. While affection was not absent, it was rarely discussed or physically expressed. Sex was seen as a necessary function of marriage but none of the witnesses expressed any sense of fulfillment or mutual happiness being derived from it. This may of course be a reflection of the unhelpfulness of oral evidence about such sensitive areas of relationships. There was still a clear separation of roles within marriage, with that of domestic financial manager and moral arbiter being reserved almost exclusively for the wife and mother. Husbands occasionally shared these domestic duties but only in times of crisis caused by illness or childbirth. (82) Husbands of the kind found by Helen Bosanquet in Shoreditch in 1899, *"mean with money... callous in sex... harsh to their children... violent when drunk"*, are not absent from the oral evidence, but this was not the general pattern of relationships in working-class families; brutal, drunken and neglectful husbands were exceptional.. (83) There was more usually a respect and regard shown by husbands for the domestic skills of their wives as household managers and for the standards of behaviour set by their wives, both in their families and in the neighbourhood. Given such relationships, it is not impossible to see the beginnings of companionship.

This separation of roles within marriage is confirmed by Sandra Taylor, using oral evidence from Nottingham for the period 1890-1930. Moreover, she maintains that such relationships as existed between husbands and wives reflected "the hegemonic ideology of the innate superiority of man". (84) This patriarchal family structure coupled with the domestic ideology prevailing at the time assumed that marriage and family life would provide for all a woman's needs since anything other than this was unnatural, "independence and self-reliance being qualities not desirable in females". (85) In other words, relationships as far as women were concerned were based on inequality and any companionship which may have emerged from such relationships was not that of equals.

Autobiographical evidence collected by David Vincent does lend some support to the notion highlighted by John Benson, that more companionable marriages may have emerged after 1850. All the autobiographers were aware of the importance of choosing a suitable marriage partner, but had few illusions about family life, seeing it as

more vulnerable to outside material pressures than protective of those within it. Yet, despite these mundane attitudes and low expectations of married relationships, some affection and even love might survive the inevitable tensions and conflicts that would arise between husband and wife, and they might even reach a point when they could "recognise with gratitude a companion in the struggle for existence, but that was all". (86) Vincent is not saying that there was no love or affection between married couples but that such feelings always had to be balanced against the material survival of the family never far from poverty: a kind of companionship for mutual survival had emerged.

In some ways oral evidence gives a clearer, less contradictory picture of relationships between mothers and children. This reflects, no doubt, the greater willingness of oral witnesses to talk about relationships with their parents than with their partners. It is not surprising to learn that witnesses argue that relationships with parents were determined to a large extent by the function of the family as a socialising agent, and that participants accepted their roles unquestioningly. Children learnt many necessary and practical lessons about work, child-care and domestic economy, but they also learnt a code of behaviour based on obedience to parents and survival through hard work. Outside agencies might reinforce these standards, but they were learnt in the family at mother's knee. (87) Lynn Jamieson, using oral evidence from Scotland, discovered relationships between mothers and daughters that were strongly affected by the "limited resources and limiting conventions" of working-class life in the nineteenth century and its cultural norms and which resulted in heavy demands being made of daughters. (88) She found that the relationships which developed between mothers and children in families struggling to survive may have been harsh but they were certainly binding. Work was a *"highly emotionally charged 'currency' in intimate relationships"* which developed between mothers and children. (89) A mother's love was expressed in terms of work and she expected a similar response from her children, and this, together with the small payments given in return for jobs, led to the development of *"intense emotional and material bonds connecting mothers and children"*. (90) Often, domestic demands, placed on daughters particularly, must have caused conflict, but Ellen Ross did find hints in the evidence of what she called an elusive element in their relationships, in which the desire to help arose from more than simple family duty, arising instead from a very deep mutual affection irrespective of their status as mother and daughter. (91)

An alternative approach to family relationships has been made by examining levels of domestic violence in working-class families using court records and newspaper reports

of court cases. Nancy Tomes maintains that the incidence of, the context of, and the attitudes shown towards domestic violence can be used as an index of the treatment of working-class women and, by implication, can be used as an indicator of relationships and attitudes. The cases show common sources of tension and similar attitudes lying behind the relationships between husbands and wives and, when these broke down and erupted in violence, they became highly visible. The causes given for violence, such as wives failing in their domestic duties, interfering with their husbands' actions, or pursuing their own at the expense of their husbands', show that relationships were based on male prerogatives in which violence was seen as a `normal' method for husbands to discipline their wives and assert their own natural superiority. (92) This widespread use of violence and the relative helplessness of wives in the face of it is largely supported by David Woods, but he is aware that the fragmentary nature of the evidence makes it almost impossible to quantify family violence and, while he does admit that miners and puddlers, particularly, had a bad reputation, it is important not to overcompensate for missing evidence and assume that all husbands beat their wives and children regularly. (93) Nancy Tomes concludes that relationships were becoming less violent by the end of the century as standards of living improved. Wives became more dependent on their husbands and therefore played a less powerful role in the family resulting in less tension and conflict. (94) This analysis lends support to John Benson's argument that domestic relationships were becoming more companionable after 1850, while Woods also stresses the importance of the notion of respectability, the civilising effect of philanthropic agencies and improved education in this process of 'civilising' working-class relationships. (95)

Some of the attitudes common to the working-class in the nineteenth century and which were intimately connected with the relationships experienced by these families, have already been touched upon and literature on the subject is slowly growing. It can be divided into three broad areas: domestic ideology and the role of the working-class mother; attitudes towards sex and marriage; and parental attitudes towards children. None of these areas is discrete and they frequently overlap.

Fundamental to all inter-personal relationships and attitudes was the acceptance of, the conflict with, and, at times, the rejection of the prevailing sets of ideas and values that made up domestic ideology in the nineteenth century. This essentially middle-class ideology saw the home as *"a kind of social sanctuary--a spot sacred to peace and goodwill, where love alone is to rule, and harmony prevail .... where the honest love of children yields a rich compensation for the hollow friendship of men"*. (96) Moreover, this sanctuary was to be occupied by:

> *"a perfect ideal of an English wife and mother, kind, considerate, self-sacrificing, and sensible, so pure-hearted as to be utterly ignorant of and averse to any sensual indulgence, but so unselfishly attached to the man she loves, as to be willing to give up her own wishes and feelings for his sake".* (97)

The Victorian family was the first in history which was long-lasting, due to the overall fall in mortality, and it was important as the place of socialisation of children and the continuing socialisation of adults. Whether this new domestic ideology was the means by which the middle-class articulated its distinctness from both the aristocracy and the working class, or whether it was a unifying and universal norm transcending class boundaries, it is clear that it was redefined by working-class families who were not merely the passive recipients of a handed-down value system. (98) By the end of the nineteenth century it had emerged in many forms: as a widely accepted desire for respectability, cleanliness and order; as an awareness of the importance of neighbourliness and thrift; in a relatively unforgiving attitude towards sexual relationships, although there were interesting variations here; and at a very basic, but nonetheless, important domestic level as worship at that *"shrine to respectability and domesticity"*, the front parlour, which middle-class observers could rarely understand since it was an irrational use of scarce resources. (99)

Of even more importance for the development of family relationships was the conflict caused by the demands of the new domestic ideology. Jane Lewis has drawn attention to the tensions that must have existed in most working-class families where there was a gap between prescribed behaviour and actual behaviour, given the material realities of working-class life. (100) These tensions were perhaps felt at their keenest when working-class mothers needed to find paid employment outside the home, especially since the overall trend in recorded employment for married women after 1851 shows a sharp fall. (101) It may have been the case that those wives who continued working after marriage offended their husbands' manhood by making their failure to provide highly visible and traditional male attitudes to working wives were extremely slow to change. (102) Middle-class contemporary opinion was also sharply critical of working wives and mothers since, not only were children neglected, but it was assumed that moral degradation accompanied all female work. As Shaftesbury said, *"if you corrupt the woman, you poison the waters of life at the very foundation"*. (103) Oral evidence, however, suggests that the decision to work was a rational response to the pressures of poverty caused by insufficient male wages: seeking paid employment was

just one strategy used by working-class wives and mothers to balance their family budgets. (104) Moreover, such casual, episodic and irregular work following the pattern of the life cycle was widespread in the nineteenth century and has probably been grossly underestimated in official sources like the Census. (105) Whether working caused mothers to neglect their domestic duties and their children has been hotly debated. Stearns, using essentially middle-class sources, maintains that they were bad housekeepers, being sloppy with housework and wasteful with food. (106) Roberts sees the ability of some mothers to save from the family income as a sign of good management, and she maintains that working mothers helped to raise the standard of living of many working-class families. (107) Attempts to link working with high levels of infant mortality have been inconclusive and as yet there is no convincing evidence of a correlation between levels of work participation by mothers and the quality of childcare as measured by levels of infant mortality: such data as exists can be used to support both sides of the argument. (108) Whether the tensions caused by mothers having to work led to feelings of guilt at neglecting their families, or were reconciled with pride at being instrumental in their survival, it is never going to be easy to find out what values and meanings were attached to home amd family by working-class mothers themselves.

Working-class attitudes to sex and marriage have tempted few historians as areas of research. Weeks has attempted to place these attitudes within the context of what he calls a popular *'social morality'* which parallelled accepted middle-class Christian standards and could be just as strict. This *'social morality'* was never understood by the Victorian middle class. Investigators thought that pre-marital sex was common among some sections of the working class and it was roundly condemned as immoral, but this does not mean that it was regarded as such by the working-class itself. Old traditions of sex beginning at betrothal, with marriage following pregnancy, survived into nineteenth century industrial society where child labour was important and where evidence of a woman's fertility was essential. Such attitudes may have survived as cultural norms even though the economic rationale was no longer important. (109) Standish Meacham paints a relatively bleak picture of working-class attitudes towards marriage: a matter of fact approach prevailed, with little romance, and success lay in commonplace qualities, *"the ability to endure crises together with common sense and without panic, an understanding of one's predetermined role and a willingness to assume it"*. (110) All writers are agreed on an overwhelming sense of fatalism among the nineteenth century working-class.

For wives and mothers particularly, this earth-bound, necessarily matter-of-fact approach meant resignation to a role inferior to their husbands as dictated by the prevailing working-class social norms. It is said that they needed to be disciplined and conforming and this, almost inevitably, led to inhibition and a low level of self-awareness, with family needs always being placed over personal. Stearns takes this view even further, arguing that miners' wives in particular were little more than slaves, dominated by their husbands.

> *"Husbands gave purpose to the married women among the poor and wives slaved to make their men content."* (111)

On the theme of parental attitudes to children, three issues form the core of the debate in the literature: education, health and death. The broad educative role of the family as a socialising agent and how this influenced relationships between parents and children has already been discussed. Very little is known of the attitudes which led to the decision to send children to school or not before compulsion in 1880; did this vary according to area, oportunities for work, occupational structure or custom and habit? It is generally accepted that children's education was always subordinate to the needs of the family economy since time spent at school meant loss of earnings. Behind these mundane, economic considerations, however, there may have been widely held views that formal schooling had little value compared to the "lessons" which could be learnt at home about the importance of hard work. Such lessons would ease the passage into adult life which otherwise would be brutal. (112) Moreover, it was generally expected that children would always subordinate their own pleasures and ambitions to those of the family, possibly following the example set by their mothers in this respect. Inevitably there would be conflict if children wanted to stay on at school, but for many children the opportunity to share in supporting the family must have been a source of pride and satisfaction. (113)

On the issues of health and childcare the middle-class in the nineteenth century were in no doubt that some sections of the working class valued infant life very cheaply, and they accused the working class of neglect and ignorance when it came to children's health. (114) No doubt reality was somewhat removed from this picture of blanket unconcern for the health of children, but here again evidence is scarce on such a sensitive issue. Oral evidence lends support to the argument that working-class mothers themselves did not see infant mortality as an indicator of their success or failure at child-rearing. Poor housing and sanitation and the overall context of poverty may have led to low expectations of health but it cannot be inferred from this that

deliberate neglect or indifference were the commonplace attitudes of working-class mothers.

Working-class attitudes to family death are an intriguing issue since all families would have lived with the threat of their closest emotional relationships being dissolved suddenly, and yet there is almost no evidence of what parents thought about the deaths of their children or how children coped with the loss of the security provided by their parents. Autobiographical evidence used by David Vincent shows that death was nearly always viewed with material considerations in mind, since *"not many working men could afford the luxury of investing so much emotion in a child"*, and for many it would have seemed *"no more than the intensification of the misery of existence"*. (115) Grief is a human emotion and must have been experienced, but its intensity and duration should be seen within the context of the fatalistic attitudes to life and death commonly held by the working class in the nineteenth century.

This review of the issues debated by social historians concerning working-class family relationships and attitudes has assumed that they were experienced and held by mining families also. Indeed, the issues have only been dealt with sketchily by mining historians, if at all. Some accept and rehearse the views of nineteenth century middle-class investigators and commentators about the character of miners. They were reckless and indifferent to civilising institutions and their spendthrift ways disrupted family life; as a body they were "animal, sensual, very ignorant". (116) They lived in squalor, dirt and degradation, their main pastime being heavy-drinking and cruel sports and among whom the practice of wife-selling had not disappeared as late as 1875. (117) However, most writers are aware that this picture is overdrawn by nineteenth century contemporaries as a result of their not understanding the different behaviour patterns and attitudes prevalent among miners. They are also aware that there were improvements in the miners' way of life in the nineteenth century as their isolation was broken down and they came under the civilising influence of organisations like the Methodist church; as education facilities improved; and as miners became unionised. Such improvements were reflected in the family life enjoyed by miners: they became better husbands and their wives improved too, working less outside the home and devoting more time to looking after their homes and families. (118) Alan Campbell throws some light on the transmission of attitudes amongst miners since in Lanarkshire he found a high level of occupational continuity: miners bred miners and tended to marry miners' daughters. Moreover, in Lanarkshire, very few miners' wives worked outside the home. Thus, it is possible that patterns of behaviour and ways of thinking here would be passed on from generation to generation. This perhaps helps to explain

the relative slowness of miners to change their way of life since they married and lived in such tightly-knit social groups and were relatively impervious to outside influences. (119)

However, in other areas, and at particular times of economic hardship, it was necessary for some wives to seek paid employment outside the home. Such work caused conflict in working-class families for mothers torn between the economic imperative to work and their domestic duties, and this must have been even worse in mining families where these duties were even more onerous because of the nature of mining work itself involving shifts and the almost constant need to wash clothes. How did such mothers reconcile their family responsibilities with working outside the home; how were these conflicts resolved within themselves and with their husbands; how serious would the family economic crisis need to be in order to take the decision to work? (120) Moreover, if miners' wives were forced into this supportive role bordering on the slavery of producing meals and services, this must have had some effect on the nature of their relationship with their husbands, forcing them into very subservient roles within a patriarchal family structure. Such a balance of power was unlikely to be upset unless wives could work and make a substantial contribution to the family economy. (121) This almost total economic dependence on their husbands was also coupled with the knowledge of the precariousness of their family's security given the dangerous nature of mining, and for many miners' wives must have been an oppressive psychological burden. Given these limited expectations, Bill Williamson argues that contentment with their lot was the only tolerable attitude for miners' wives, that their self-respect came from diligent housework and well turned-out children, that their commitment to their families gave satisfaction, while the dull monotonous routine gave a kind of freedom. Miners' wives did not despair because they knew of no alternatives. (122) Given such a view it is difficult not to see miners' wives as passive victims of a cruel socio-economic system which relegated them to very inferior roles.

Other external factors connected with mining may also have had important influences on the quality of family life: the unpredictability of wages made it very difficult for wives to plan budgets effectively; the methods of payment in public houses kept the husband away from home and sometimes led to heavy drinking; the small, dark insanitary homes where privacy was impossible drove many miners to the relative comfort of the public house; the wash-days in cramped conditions with few amenities stretched tempers to their utmost. In such circumstances, where the very job itself was intrusive, it must have been very difficult for a miner and his family to enjoy stability and comfort in their domestic life. (123)

On the issue of child-care, John Benson argues that atttitudes were no better or worse on the coalfields than elsewhere; there was ignorance and indifference; infant illnesses were ignored; vaccination was distrusted; and diseases like bronchitis and diarrhoea were rampant; and the reality of *"a harassed mother doing her best to cope with too little money in a small, insanitary home"* must have been commonplace. Patience would frequently be exhausted, relationships between mothers and children strained to the limits and beyond leading to the use of corporal punishment, and children would frequently be left alone at home resulting in all too frequent accidents and death. (124) On the issue of their children's education, it is suggested that miners were again no different from the rest of the working-class population in their low estimation of its value and in sharing the belief that they could best serve both their family's and their children's interests by getting them into paid work as soon as possible. (125)

Without doubt the shared hardships and privations of lives spent on the edge of poverty, the all-pervading, intrusive and dangerous nature of mining itself, the absence of external welfare agencies, the geographical and cultural isolation, real or imagined, and the example, set by mothers in particular, of surviving through all this, bound mining families closely together:

> *"The nineteenth-century mining family was strong and resilient and altogether more responsible than it is given credit for".*
> (126)

A Regional View: The West Midlands

There has been little attempt to delve into the areas of relationships and attitudes by those historians who have made studies of coalmining communities in the West Midlands. However, in her study of the Cannock Chase coalfield, Mary Mills set out to dispel the traditional image of the coalminers' wife as a virtual slave, tied to her husband's job and to the home. She found that the pattern of work for women from mining households, however, conformed to the national model: some limited amounts of work were available for young girls, but after marriage, most women rarely had full time jobs, although they may have found casual work from time to time. (127) She did find, however, that there were leisure opportunities in the area, mostly centred on the local churches, and these undoubtedly provided opportunities for wives and

mothers to get out of the house. (128) The evidence does not show, of course, what level of take-up of these opportunites there was by miners' wives particularly, or whether the take-up was limited to certain points in the female life cycle when domestic pressures were not so burdensome. She also found that there were opportunities for family leisure in the form of day trips, Wakes and Sports Days, often provided by the colliery companies themselves, but it does still seem as if most leisure was segregated, possibly beginning to be shared by the end of the century when couples went to the pub together. (129) Mary Mills also found the existence of Female Friendly Societies in the area, some attached to churches and some meeting in public houses, some being thinly-disguised attempts by the middle class to encourage respectability while others were basically savings or clothing clubs. (130) Again, levels of take-up by miners' wives are not known, nor is the influence, if any, these organisations had on the miners' domestic economy, or family life in general.

The Black Country

Almost nothing has been written about working-class family life in the Black Country in the nineteenth century, and therefore it is only possible to put forward some fairly uncontroversial generalisations. It seems that most homes were no more overcrowded than working-class homes anywhere, with an average density of five persons per house prevailing for most of the nineteenth century. (131) Again, the houses themselves were no better or worse than the general stock of houses provided for the working-class in the nineteenth century. *"It is astonishing ..... to note"*, a keen observer wrote in 1850, *"how cleverly and adroitly they are contrived to yield to their tenants the smallest possible quantity of comfort and convenience."* (132)

The present writer is aware of no first-hand evidence in existence for the second half of the nineteenth century about the quality of life enjoyed by miners and their families inside their homes, or about the quality of the relationships enjoyed by members of mining families, or about the sets of attitudes which lay behind their family life, other than that originating from middle-class observers, with the biases and misunderstandings which it inevitably contains. Medical Officers of Health in the Black Country were just as keen as other middle class observers to berate working-class mothers about standards of childcare. The Bilston Medical Officer in 1892 gave evidence that mothers who worked were prevented from suckling and this led to increased infant mortality, and the Wednesbury Medical Officer recommended that mothers be instructed in the skills of feeding, clothing and rearing their children.

(133) The situation by the end of the century was summed up by the Wolverhampton Medical Officer in 1898 when he blamed "improper feeding, lack of care, neglect of cleanliness and ventilation, insufficient food, clothing and shelter" for the high infant mortality still prevalent in the Black Country. (134) Working-class attitudes towards education in the Black Country follow patterns observed elsewhere with illiteracy amongst miners as high as 66% compared with 33% for the general population, and with little change before 1870. Outside observers found that education was being imposed on an unwilling population which saw little advantage to educating children in an area where work was readily available at a relatively early age. Most children before 1870 probably received two years of education and this ended at the age of ten. (135)

The present author's own research into levels of participation in work in one small Black Country village has shown that the traditional view of miners' wives being almost exclusively concerned with domestic duties can be challenged. In Lower Gornal the proportion of women from mining families who were employed in 1881 was as high as 24.4%. Friedlander calculated a figure of 30.1% of women aged over 20 and working in coal mining areas in 1871. (136) My figure of 24.4% would translate into a figure of 45.5% if only women over 20 are included. Louise Tilly and Joan Scott calculated a figure of between 25% and 30% of women employed in 1851, and Jane Lewis has produced a figure of 31.6% for employed women in 1901. (137) Not only is the number of working women from mining households unusually high, but the number of married women employed is also somewhat surprising with a figure of 31.3% of miners' wives working in 1881. (138) This is also a much higher proportion than in other areas in the West Midlands. (139) One can only speculate as to whether these high levels of work participation reflect family needs and domestic economic crisis. As to the effects on levels of childcare the evidence is inconclusive although the Medical Officer of the Sedgley Local Board in 1876 blamed the large number of deaths of children under five on *"ignorance, carelessness or poverty"*. (140)

Explanations

Three separate strands of argument can be picked out from the attempts to explain the structure of working-class families, the social relationships which bound them together and the attitudes which lay behind them. The commonest strand, and probably the most persuasive, is that which seeks to find economic causes at the root of all structures and relationships. It is said that the large volume of in-migration to the

coalfields of young males led to early marriage and high fertility which resulted in a population with a young age structure. Given that women in coalmining areas did not contribute much to the family income and that male earnings tended to shrink at a relatively early age, this was economically rational, since the larger number of sons resulting from this particular demographic structure could support their families for a period until they themselves married. (141) In other words, large families for miners made economic sense since they provided, *"a kind of life insurance or a pension scheme particularly suited to their special occupational characteristics"*. (142) It is a persuasive model of family structure. The problem lies in trying to find evidence to show what actually did cause miners to make decisions about marriage and family size and to show that these decisions did not just arise from a context of poverty and ignorance but were rational decisions taken in response to economic circumstances.

The model has been refined. Michael Haines has argued that miners brought into their new communities a quasi-rural life style which included early marriage and high fertility. These behavioural patterns were reinforced by the relative isolation of mining communities, the absence of female employment outside the home, the higher wages which accrued to miners at an early age thus encouraging early marriage and high fertility, and the overall imbalance in the sex ratio in mining communities caused by the attraction of a disproportionate number of young adult males into the industry as it expanded in the early nineteenth century. (143) Haines also agrees with Friedlander in assuming a social security motive for large families amongst miners since children could care for them in old age. (144) While it is relatively easy to demonstrate that many of these demographic characteristics were true of mining communities, it is extremely difficult to prove that causal links existed between them: the model looks good but how does it work?

The particular economic circumstances in which miners lived have also been used to explain their family relationships and attitudes. The paternalism and the relegation of wives to a subsidiary role bordering on that of domestic slave has been explained in terms of the nature of mining work itself with its total involvement of the family and its disruptive nature. The unpredictability of pay and the methods of payment can help to explain much of the friction and tension that may have existed in relationships between miners and their wives. Their small, insanitary and sometimes overcrowded homes, where domestic comfort and privacy were sparse commodities, also serve to explain the too-frequent resort to the public house by miners, which must have been the source of continuous domestic friction in some homes. The poor quality of the domestic circumstances in which many miners lived also helps to explain the almost fatalistic

attitude towards issues like childcare, especially the deaths of their children since it was the only psychologically viable attitude given the circumstances in which they lived. (145) On the other hand, Bill Williamson argues that the dangerous nature of mining made marital conflict issue-specific and of short duration since wives were reluctant to let their husbands go underground bearing grudges which may have affected their strength or safety, and since their departure from home each day might be their last. (146)

The material conditions in which the working class as a whole lived and worked improved after 1850 with better health, housing and diet coming within the reach of increasing numbers, and less exhausting and dangerous work becoming the norm. John Benson concludes that this led to a *"profound and beneficial effect"* on relationships which became more stable and companionable as the century progressed. (147) Moreover, as people lived longer and families became smaller, parents could devote more time to their children and this must have had important consequences for family relationships. (148) Although coal miners traditionally lagged behind the rest of the working class in changing their patterns of thought and behaviour, even they must have been enjoying an improvement in the comfort and stability of family life by the end of the nineteenth century. There is, of course, little evidence to prove that this causal connection existed between improving standard of living and relationships.

A second strand of argument seeking to explain working-class family structure and relationships can be seen in the work of Michael Anderson, although his model was constructed from data about textile workers rather than miners. This model seeks to explain social relationships within the household in terms of their "instrumental" values. He found that, while nuclear family-based residence was the norm, there were what he considered to be a significant number of households, 23%, which contained more than just the nuclear family. These people who occupied non-familial residential status comprised young singles, young marrieds and widows, many of whom were kin. (149) He sought to explain this household structure in terms of the mutual advantages which would accrue to those sharing. Young married couples sharing with widowed parents saved on the rent, provided furniture, and helped overcome the housing shortage. Widows could provide help with children while parents worked, and in times of family crisis caused by sickness and death it was to kin that stricken families would turn for practical help and money. (150) Anderson did not see this behaviour as any kind of overt conscious calculation of the economic advantages of shared residence, but rather that *"norms develop to set a seal on conduct which is in line with these economic pressures"* and these norms provided a kind of insurance

policy to secure a minimum standard of living. (151) One could be forgiven for thinking that this was a type of calculation by any other name.

Such a model, with its implications that the working class were motivated in their family relationships by self-interest, has naturally been criticised. Elizabeth Roberts found little support in the oral evidence from the end of the nineteenth century for this *"short run calculative instrumentality"* (152), but found that there was a wide mixture of motives behind the relationships ranging from simple family duty to very obvious affection and that many relationships involved great personal cost.

> *"Kin did their best for kin, sometimes not a very adequate best, but often at considerable personal expense. There was very little evidence of calculation in what they did for each other."*
>
> (153)

This is a view which had already been expressed by Bill Williamson who saw relationships with kin as being *"built up of a thousand sharing trivia .... of daily contact and great concern for one another"*. (154) Jeffrey Weeks, in his examination of sexuality, is also critical of Anderson's calculative instrumentality to explain relationships, and he seeks to stress the warmth and mutual support that existed in working-class family relationships. (155) Although not immediately relevant to the late nineteenth century, Young and Willmott in their examination of the working class in the twentieth century, found that, while relationships with kin could be harsh and stifling, there was also much affection, and this in turn made duty to family *"a more or less unlimited liability beyond the bounds of self-interest and rational calculation"*. (156)

A third strand of explanation for the relationships and attitudes which existed in nineteeenth century families can be seen in the work of those historians who have been trying to rescue women from the obscurity of the past. The role of wives and mothers and their relationships with their husbands are explained in terms of their subordination to men and the home is seen as a place where this was reinforced; a place where women's work was valued lowly, "that empire in which woman could fulfil her innate disposition for motherhood and caring for man". (157) Her role within the family forced inferiority on her in her total financial dependence on her male provider. The problem with this strand of explanation is that it really gets no closer to how women themselves saw their role than the male-centred view which has held the stage for so long. We have no certain way of knowing what value the working-class placed on the

work of wives and mothers in socialising their children, striving to make their homes comfortable against the odds and managing their family budgets. If a miner could not do his job successfully without the vital domestic services provided by his wife, and if, against the odds, she managed to provide a reasonably comfortable and well-run home, did he really value her role lowly and would her inferiority ever have been articulated as such? It is all too easy to take twentieth century value systems back with us into the past: but we should resist it.

The Evidence used in this Thesis

Arthur Marwick, in his forceful destruction of E.H Carr's definition of "historical fact", said that the essential work of the historian is to produce reconstructions or interpretations of the past using the pieces of the past which have survived. It is not the job of the historian to manipulate *'facts'*, but to tease out information from the evidence and to develop new techniques for analysing evidence. (158) Earlier this century similar views were expressed by Marc Bloch in his attempts to justify the job of the historian:

> *Despite our inevitable subordination to the past, we have freed ourselves at least to the extent that, eternally condemned to know only by means of its "tracks", we are nevertheless successful in knowing far more of the past than the past itself had thought good to tell us. Properly speaking, it is a glorious victory of mind over its material.*
>
> (159)

The present writer hopes that he fits into this tradition of historians in both his approach to the evidence and the ways in which he will reconstruct and interpret the past he sees emerging from it. The historiographical issues identified and discussed earlier in this opening chapter will be explored from this methodological standpoint. Before outlining the sources of evidence used in this Thesis, I think it important to state at the outset that I am of the opinion that much that is said about the social history of the working class, and about coalminers in particular, has been based on a very slim evidential base. This is not meant as a criticism of the social history which has been written over the last thirty years, but is meant to serve as a reminder that social historians of the working class must nearly always necessarily work from a slim evidential base. The working class has left behind but a very slim record of itself, and

therefore suffers from being judged by the record left about it constructed by unsympathetic and unknowing, and frequently hostile, outsiders.

What evidence, then, can the historian of working class society use in his reconstruction of the lives and relationships of those groups of which it was composed; groups, moreover, who by their very nature were largely inarticulate? Despite their numbers, the life experiences of the multitude of occupational groups which made up the working class in nineteenth century Britain, are very difficult to recover. John Vincent has said that history is about literate societies, and, moreover, is tilted towards literate people in literate societies, and therefore, *"no writing normally means no history"*. (160) Does this mean then that the working class can have no history, except when they experienced those multitudinous yet brief moments of contact with the articulate middle class, to be hired and fired, to be reprimanded and punished, to be blamed and castigated for society's ills, to be patronised and lectured at, and to be done good to as the recipients of bounty? History is about the rich, the famous and the powerful, and yet the working class had none of these attributes, and the evidence falls silent again. For the historian of family life there is another problem in that most history is male, and yet most nineteenth century family life was overwhelmingly female dominated, and the historian is overwhelmed, yet again, with the silence!

What can the social historian use as evidence? Few members of the working class were considered important enough to attract the attention of the biographer: who would have wanted to read about a coalminer, a nailmaker, or a chainmaker in the nineteenth century? Nineteenth century working class autobiographies are rare despite the excellent recovery work done by John Burnett and David Vincent. (161) Vincent stated the obvious, but necessary truth, that all autobiographers were brought up in families of some kind or other, and most formed families themselves, and therefore much could be gained from what they have to say about the private parts of their lives shared only with their families. (162) And yet autobiographies of nineteenth century coalminers are rarer, and those of Black Country coalminers virtually non-existent. (163) It may have been that the first hurdle for any autobiographer, that of being literate, would seem to have defeated any such aspirants from the Black Country who may have wanted to express their reflections on their lives. This is probably being too hard on all those miners who were literate, and goes against the evidence that there was an improvement in education standards in the second half of the nineteenth century. However, it was true that most would have regarded their lives as ordinary, containing nothing worth putting in a book, and why should the working class have

been any different from the rest of the population in the nineteenth century in being reticent about those private areas of their lives of no obvious concern to outsiders?

Oral reminiscence has been used very effectively to reconstruct working class experiences of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries by writers like Elizabeth Roberts, Angela John and Paul Thompson, and this serves to remind us of the need for working class history to counteract the official history written, of course, by the middle class. Paul Thompson does also remind us, however, that while oral witnesses confirm the disruptive nature of mining on family life, and the unending battle to maintain a decent life and the bitterness which ensued from this, they are very reluctant to reveal their feelings. This may, of course have been because they could not recollect them or because they were not considered to be important, or it was simply force of habit, as one of his witnesses revealed:

> *None of us wears his heart on our sleeves. We was brought up to keep us moans and us groans to ourselves.*
>
> (164)

The present writer is unaware of the existence of any Black Country working class oral evidence for the late nineteenth century, along the lines of that collected by the historians cited above, valuable though this would have been for the historian of family life. Although oral reminiscences have been used to reconstruct the interiors of the working class houses at the Black Country Museum, again, they tend to date back only to the early twentieth century. The late nineteenth century in the Black Country is mostly silent. (165)

The present writer is not aware either of any nineteenth century paintings depicting aspects of Black Country working class family life, or, indeed of any aspects of working class life, although artists like John Buckler and Thomas Wood were commissioned to draw views of Staffordshire life in the nineteenth century. Such views were mostly of a rural landscape fast disappearing, or of churches and other buildings, and where people do appear in their drawings they are usually in highly romanticised settings. (166) Nor is the present writer aware of any unpublished photographs depicting working class family life. There are pictures of the working class at work, in parades and present at formal occasions. There are pictures of the kinds of houses in which they lived, and street scenes in plenty, taken usually in the 1920's and 1930's before they were demolished in one of the many slum clearance programmes of the twentieth century. The insides of working class homes, and the

families who lived out their existence there, however, remained largely invisible to the camera. (167)

The historian thus becomes increasingly dependent on literate outside observers of working-class life, frequently condemnatory and hostile, and nearly always uncomprehending of what they saw, heard and experienced. The local press proved to be a not surprisingly disappointing source of evidence for working-class family life in the nineteenth century. The commonplace and mundane, as the life and death incidents of working class family life were, rarely found a place in the news in the nineteenth century press. The present writer sampled local newspapers for each of the decades between 1850 and 1890 and useful evidence was rare. There were frequent references to working conditions: reports were frequent and detailed concerning mining accidents; levels of wages were discussed; and condemnation of practices like payment in truck and the payment of wages in pubs occur regularly, even as late as the 1880's, and these were issues of great concern to the working class and middle class alike in the Black Country in the second half of the nineteenth century. There was much evidence from the pages of the newspapers of middle class concern for what were considered to be the particular working-class vices of drunkenness and gambling, and they did particularly express concern at the effects these intemperate habits had on working-class family life. Where relevant, such evidence has been introduced and discussed in the text. Perhaps the most fertile source of newspaper evidence comes from the detailed reporting of court cases, whether before local magistrates or judges on Assize, since many of these cases were about what, nowadays, would be called *'domestic incidents'*, involving relationships between husband and wife and parents and children. Again, where relevant, such evidence of family life in crisis and frequently at the point of breakdown has been used in the text. (168) However, it must be stressed that those necessarily private attitudes which determined intimate relationships between husband and wife, parents and children, and those which might explain relationships between families and others with whom they shared their homes, were not apparently the concern of newspaper reporters and their editors in the nineteenth century.

The 1830's and 1840's, and the 1850's to a lesser extent, produced an outpouring of government reports, pamphlets and printed sermons on the conditions of the working class, and the Black Country received its fair share of investigation in the 1840's and 1850's particularly. Three investigations in particular resulted in the coalmining and iron manufacturing industries and the people who worked in them being dissected in some detail: the investigation by Royal Commission into child labour between 1840

and 1842, and in particular that of James Mitchell into the coalmining industry; the investigation set up in 1843, and made by Thomas Tancred, following the Staffordshire miners' strike of 1842 which had been linked with the Chartist movement; and the series of Reports on the Mining Districts made from 1843 to 1859 by H.Seymour Tremenheere, following the 1842 Mines Act. (169) Although the first two of these investigations in particular are early to the period under investigation in this Thesis, they do form the background to any study of coalmining and especially those employed in the industry in the second half of the nineteenth century. The Reports made by the Mines Inspectorate after 1850 proved to be sparse on information about coalmining family life, as did Commissions on Accidents in Coal Mines, the Coal Trade, and the Regulation and Inspection of Coal Mines. (170) Such Reports as those listed above were, of course, written by outsiders, they were the product of middle-class observers, they reflect middle-class values and they were probing areas largely unfamiliar to the investigators. Unknowing and frequently hostile they may have been, but it is impossible to ignore what these investigators found. Where such evidence has been used in this Thesis the limitations of both its accuracy and credibility are discussed in the text. Evidence taken from printed sermons has also been used in this Thesis to show examples of middle-class attitudes to working-class behaviour in so far as it concerned their family life. Such evidence has been treated in the same way in the text, in so far as its accuracy and reliability are concerned.

Two major official documentary sources of evidence have been used in the Thesis. Whatever the reasons lying behind the decision in 1800 to count the population every ten years, this Decennial Census has proved to be a valuable source of evidence for the historian of the nineteenth century, and in particular for those wishing to reconstruct the structure of households in the past and to examine the relationships to be found therein. (171) The working class may have been unwilling to give outsiders anything but the briefest of glimpses into their family life, but every ten years they were forced to give information to officialdom in the form of the Census Enumerators, and often intimate information, about their households, the families within them, and the multifarious collection of co-resident individuals to be found within them. Thus the Census, especially from 1851 onwards, provides the historian with a multi-hued picture, at specific points in time, of just one slice of working class life, but an important slice for all that. It is purely speculative, but it may help to try to imagine how little we would know about the working class without the Census. The limitations of the Census Enumerators' Books will be discussed fully in the text as the information is used to build up a picture of working class life in the Black Country in the second half of the nineteenth century. The other official documentary source used

in this Thesis are the Marriage Registers kept in churches where marriages were solemnised. While not as rich in information as the Census Books, they have yielded some useful data concerning age of marriage in the second half of the nineteenth, and crucial to the explanations offered for changes in family structure in this Thesis.

Methodology

If the evidence is thin and mostly crumbly, what methods can be used to tease out the reconstruction of working-class family life, and to address the even harder task of trying to explain it? Since the main source of evidence used in this Thesis is the nineteenth century Census it would follow that the main methodology used to analyse and interpret working-class families will be that of quantification. An abundance of quantitative data is a relatively modern phenomenon and can even perhaps be dated to the first Census of 1801. Nineteenth century Census data will be used in a number of different ways in this Thesis in order to reconstruct the families of coalminers and the working class generally.

How will the Census data be used? Broadly, coalminer families in a coalmining community will be compared with coalminer families who lived in a metalworking community. This comparison needs elaboration in three ways. In the first place two Census dates were chosen as far apart in time as possible in order to examine the possibility of a broad sweep of historical change or continuity rather than more gradual change over time which would have been possible by using each of the Censuses from the second half of the nineteenth century. This decision to look for the broad sweep of change was therefore bound by two constraints immediately: the hundred year secrecy rule makes the 1891 Census the latest which can be used by historians; and the Censuses before 1851 do not contain the kind of detailed information which would be useful in any reconstruction of nineteenth century families. Thus, in a way the dates of 1851 and 1891 chose themselves. Looking for changes in household and family structure longitudinally over time would seem, in the opinion of the present writer, to demand a reasonably long time span between the points of observation. Otherwise, any changes which had taken place might not have worked through the relatively unchanging structure of the household, to become easily visible in the Census record. Changes in households over time tend to be slow and cumulative, and this would, therefore, seem to demand a long interval of time in the choice of observation points

by the historian. The gap of forty years, about two generations, between the two Censuses used in this Thesis would fit with this hypothesis. However, the present writer's earlier work on the 1881 Census has been referred to where this was relevant in order to make important comparisons or to confirm trends, but essentially the methodology is one of comparison between two points in time in the second half of the nineteenth century. The problems involved in analysing and interpreting the Census data are discussed at relevant points in the text of the Thesis.

The organisational units for data collection in the second half of the nineteenth century were the Poor Law Unions set up after 1834. Within these areas a number of sub-districts were identified, and within each of these the registrar was responsible for further sub-division into enumeration districts. The basic format of the enumeration established in 1851 remained throughout the century, and the differences between the two Censuses of 1851 and 1891 will be discussed in the text where relevant to the reconstruction or the development of the argument.

In the second place the Census data has been used to extract information about a discrete occupational group, the coalminers: a group of workers important for their sheer numbers in certain areas of the country as a whole, and in particular areas of the Black Country; a group which most of the writers in the historiography see as having their own set of cultural norms, and in particular for this Thesis, their own set of family-formation norms; and a group which has acquired in the historiography a kind of special mythology, probably arising, in part, from their heroic struggles against the unacceptable face of capitalism in the early twentieth century. It was not difficult to identify "coalminers" in the Enumerators' Books for, in the two communities studied, the Enumerators seem to have been reasonably consistent in their use of words to describe occupation. A variety of different words were used to describe the occupation of coalminer: *"collier"*, *"labourer at the coal face"*, *"labourer in the mines"*, *"hewer"*, and of course the catch-all *"coalminer"*. Three other types of *"miner"* appeared in the Enumerators' Books: *"ironstone miners"*, *"fireclay miners"* and *"limestone miners"*, and in all the Enumeration Districts they appear to have been enumerated distinctly from the coalminers.

Occasionally, the vague term *"miner"* was used, and in this Thesis such examples were taken to be coalminers on the grounds that other types of miner appeared to be so enumerated, and the incidence of such vague recording was so slight as to be unlikely to affect the data too much, except in Cradley in 1851 where the coalminers were a very small occupational group, and in this case only those who were specifically recorded as *"coalminers"* were included in the sample.

Having reconstructed coalminer families and their households quantitatively, they will then be compared with those of the working class generally, among whom they were born and lived out their existence. A similar quantitative reconstruction will be made of working class families generally. This will then allow comparison to be made of a discrete occupational group with the rest of the working class at two points in time in the second half of the nineteenth century. The present writer believes it is important, in building up a reconstruction of coalminer families and the households of which they were a part, to show those ways in which they shared key features with, and the ways in which they experienced their own special structures different from, the rest of the working class, and, of course, where possible to try to explain the similarities and differences.

Families, in the sense of two-generational nuclear families, are not, of course, enumerated as such by the Census; and thus a method of delineating and working with the enumeration unit - *the household*- had to be devised. A fairly straightforward approach was used of defining the Census household as a scheduled co-residing group of people. Within these co-resident groups it is possible to identify what are usually called nuclear families of parents and their children; extended households of nuclear families plus other kin; and multiple households which consisted of both nuclear families plus non-relatives, and extended families plus non-relatives. The structures of these different types of household are analysed in Chapters Four and Five, and the methodology used to identify the different discrete groups within the larger co-resident group is discussed in greater detail in these Chapters. In the 1891 Census a further complication was added to this method of classification in that households were sometimes scheduled as having two separate heads, often of quite extensive families. In the analysis these households have been classified separately as dual-head households, and the rationale lying behind this decision is discussed in detail in the text of Chapter Five. This classification methodology may seem very rigid for what was, after all in the nineteenth century, a very fluid, and multi-faceted social reality: households were in a constant state of flux. It does, however, allow comparisons to be made, with, for example, the work of Michael Anderson on Preston in 1851.

The methods used to sample these two populations from the Census Enumerators' Books, along with the strengths and weaknesses of the sampling methodology, will be discussed in the text. The methodology used to define any particular household as being a *"coalminer"* household discrete from other working class households, and that used to define the *"working class"* generally, in the context of the socio-economic

character of the Black Country in the second half of the nineteenth century, are discussed early in the Thesis.

The Census data will be used in a third way in order to broaden the reconstruction of coalminer families and households in the second half of the nineteenth century. The comparison will be taken one stage further in that a discrete occupational group of coalminers will also be examined in two different places in the Black Country. The first place was chosen as a working class industrial community where they were overwhelmingly the biggest single occupational group among smaller groups of metalworkers and a variety of other occupations, a community which can rightly be called a coalminer community because of the sheer weight of their numbers and because of the influence they must have exerted on social life and cultural norms within that community in both 1851 and 1891. The second place was also a working class industrial community, but one in which the coalminers constituted only a small occupational group among a predominantly metal working community in 1851, and whose size had only increased slightly by 1891, and where it might be assumed their influence was correspondingly less. Both areas were clearly identifiable as enumeration districts in the Censuses of 1851 and 1891. The similarities and differences between the socio-economic characteristics of the two communities in the second half of the nineteenth century are detailed in Chapter Two of this Thesis. The methodology of defining how a community might be classed as a *'coalmining'* community, as against, say, a *'metalworking'* community, is borrowed from the demographic model used by Haines, and the sociological model defined by Bulmer, both of which are discussed fully in the text of Chapter Two. It would have been perverse to have developed a different methodology for defining types of communities since the Haines and Bulmer models will be used as a starting point for the reconstruction of the two communities used in this Thesis, and will allow comparison to be made. Perhaps it should be noted at this point that the present writer is fully aware of the minefield of definition he is entering in using the word *'community'* at all. Suffice it to say at this point that he hopes to tread carefully and use the word in this Thesis to mean no more than a more or less loose collection of individuals living in proximity to one another, who may or may not have had a greater or lesser influence on each other, who may or may not have shared certain amenities like church and pub, and who may or may not have shared values, attitudes, standards of behaviour and ideals; and the word will be used interchangeably with *'settlement'* and *'industrial village'* in referring to both areas used in this Thesis. As one of Christopher Storm-Clark's oral witnesses, a Forest of Dean miner, put it in such a plausible yet vague way:

Community? Well . . . its a number of people getting together . . .
a community.

(172)

Thus, to sum up, coalminer families in a coalmining community will be compared with coalminer families who lived in a metalworking community. They will also be compared in both types of community with the working class generally, and to give the comparison historical depth, they will be compared at two points in time in the nineteenth century sufficiently far apart to be able to see change, and, of course, continuity. The present writer is not aware that this type of comparison, of an occupational group with its class, across both communities and time, has been made before. There have been studies of particular communities at one point in time; (173) there have been studies of one community over a number of years; (174) there have been studies of two communities at the same point in time; (175) and there have been studies of occupational groups at the same point in time. (176)

As was indicated earlier, the comparisons will be quantitative in nature, and this has been dictated largely by the principal source used for the reconstructions. The quantitative questions asked of the evidence will, however, be of the kind which might be called 'common sense' questions: how old were the two populations under examination, the coalminers and the rest of the working class, and how might this affect family formation; was there a gender imbalance between the two populations, and how might this affect nuptiality; what kinds of social groups can be identified as co-resident within working class households, and how were they related; how big or how small were these groups; how much and how little did their size and composition change over time, or from one community to another; what proportion did one category constitute out of the totality under examination; what relationship does the volume of any specific category have to the mean value of the whole; how much or how little kin relationship was there in working-class households in the nineteenth century; and just how much or how little were coalminer families different from those of the rest of the working class?

While, however, the main method of analysing the data is that of quantifying and comparing, the present writer has endeavoured not to succumb to what has recently been called *"the beauty of numbers, and the lure of the barely calculable"*. (177) This Thesis is not an exercise in econometrics, or what some unkind critics of economic history might call, perhaps unfairly, *"quantitative contortions using*

imperfect data to put forward fairly ordinary opinions". (178) The data is certainly imperfect, and the opinions may well be ordinary, but the present writer hopes that the argument and logic are straightforward.
The quantification will be used to address the issues raised by the historiography discussed earlier in this Chapter and to shed some new light, however weak its rays, on one social phenomenon of one section of the working class in the nineteenth century.

In seeking to explain the reconstructed coalminer and other working class households and families the present writer has used the quantifiable data to look for patterns and trends but is, of course, aware that amounts and proportions of people can never explain why observed phenomena are what they are. Quantities can never explain why individuals chose to behave in certain ways, why they chose to marry when they did, why they chose to start their families when they did, how they determined the sizes of their families, and why they did, or did not, choose to share their households with other relatives and total strangers. The historian may observe patterns in structure over time, between different occupational groups and across communities, and may then want to suggest that the presence or absence of these patterns indicate preference for or avoidance of certain types of behaviour, but that is as far as he may go. If the historian is looking for explanations, he is looking for causes, and therefore he is looking for motives, and it is impossible to reconstruct motive from amounts. It is in trying to explain the structures and patterns which emerge from the quantitative analysis that the other sources of evidence will be used. These sources are, by their very nature, fragmentary and elusive, providing a tantalising glimpse, but no more, of working class life in the nineteenth century. They do not originate, in the main, from the working class itself: they are written by outsiders, about the working class. How does the historian assess the truth of the outpourings of these middle-class writers, who at their worst were patronising or hostile, and at their best simply unknowing? In this Thesis they will, in general, be analysed as hostile evidence which may, nevertheless, be telling the truth.

NOTES for CHAPTER ONE

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CHAPTER TWO

The Two Communities: Lower Gornal and Cradley

In order to examine changes in the structure of Black Country mining families in the second half of the nineteenth century, two areas have been chosen for detailed analysis: Lower Gornal and Cradley. These areas share certain social and economic characteristics common to the South-Staffordshire coalfield as a whole but they also have distinctive patterns of employment, ranging from that of the relatively isolated and more traditional type of mining community in Lower Gornal, to that of the metal-working community of Cradley where miners formed only a small part of the workforce. This chapter will therefore examine those social and economic features common to the South-Staffordshire coalfield which might have affected family life; it will also examine in more detail the two areas chosen as examples of the kinds of communities in which mining families lived in the Black Country in the second half of the nineteenth century. This examination will be made by looking at the degree of geographical and cultural isolation experienced by both communities, the pattern of migration into the communities, the social and occupational structure, and the amenities available to both communities.

The Black Country

The population of the Black Country more than doubled between 1800 and 1831 and then more than doubled again between 1831 and 1861, after which growth slowed. (1) This demographic growth can be seen in Table 2.1 below. The slowing down of growth beginning some time between 1861 and 1871 was not typical of the rest of England and Wales which experienced continued growth throughout the nineteenth century. Some deceleration in growth was almost inevitable given that the growth in the first sixty years of the nineteenth century was little short of phenomenal. The rapid increase and subsequent slowing down of population growth also mirrored the industrial expansion of the Black Country in the nineteenth century. The early years of the Industrial Revolution had witnessed explosive growth in coal mining and iron smelting followed by slower development after 1860 as mining difficulties emerged and from 1865 the output and number of blast furnaces decreased. This is also illustrated quite starkly in the pattern of demographic growth displayed by areas like Dudley and Sedgley, both tied to the vicissitudes of the coal industry. Not only did growth slow

down in these areas, but after 1861 in Dudley and 1871 in Sedgley, the population actually fell.

Table 2.1 Population 1801-91

	Sedgley		Cradley		Black Country		England and Wales
Year	Pop	% Inc	Pop	% Inc	Pop	% Inc	% Inc
1801	9874		1434		97242		
1811		41%	1607	12%	129187	33%	14%
1821	17195	23%	1696	6%	159934	24%	18%
1831	20577	20%	2022	19%	205872	29%	16%
1841	24819	21%	2686	33%	284886	38%	14%
1851	29447	19%	3383	26%	362212	27%	13%
1861	36637	25%	4075	20%	457329	26%	12%
1871	37355	2%	4695	15.2	498451	9%	13%
1881	36574	-2%	5284	12.5	546513	10%	14%
1891	36860	1%			591678	8%	12%

(2)

The economic exploitation of the Black Country had developed rapidly in the last quarter of the eighteenth century based on an abundance of coal, ironstone, limestone and fireclay. (3) The demand for coal increased rapidly in the early years of the nineteenth century and output increased from under 1 million tons in 1800 to well over 7 million tons by 1860. This output was to go on to reach a peak of 10.6 million tons in 1872, largely as a response to the boom in iron production of the early 1870's. It was brought about by the reworking of abandoned pits and an expansion in the labour force but increasing difficulties with drainage were becoming obvious. These difficulties were experienced most sharply in the north-east section of the coalfield, giving the south-western section its opportunity, facilitated by the improved transport between the two sections of the coalfield with the opening of the Netherton canal tunnel in 1858. (4) The south-western area now had a direct link to Birmingham and its enormous domestic and industrial market.

By 1886, however, output had shrunk to 6 million tons and diminishing returns were increasingly in evidence as the field of exploitation grew in size. Easy faces were worked out and problems with flooding grew, despite the South Staffordshire Mines Drainage Act of 1873 which tried to organise pumping operations. In addition to these internal problems there was increasing competition from the new mines in the Cannock Chase coalfield, and the Black Country iron industry, the main consumer of the coal, was in depression after 1875. The north-eastern section of the coalfield was slowly abandoned and in the south-western section the future lay with the concealed field on the perimeter and beyond the boundary faults. Even so, new pits sunk at Lye Cross and Sandwell Park in 1874 and Hamstead in 1875 could not make up for the decline of the multitude of smaller pits. (5) By 1900 there were still 276 mines at work, though only eleven of these employed more than 100 men underground. (6) In such circumstances a high level of in-migration in this period would not be expected and periodic shortfalls in the labour force could be met by recruitment locally from other occupations, from juveniles from non-mining families and from miners' sons following their fathers into the pit. (7) Indeed, areas like Sedgley which depended heavily on the coal industry may actually have experienced some out-migration as men sought work elsewhere and took their families with them. While there is no hard evidence that this happened, Sedgley certainly experienced a fall in population after 1871, as discussed earlier.

The foundation of the exploitation of the economic resources of the Black Country was the legendary *'Thick Coal'*, a seam ten yards thick which outcropped in many places. It was the richest and thickest coal seam in the whole country. The relative ease of working the coal so close to the surface had led to its exploitation in a large number of generally lowly-capitalised pits. Neither the cost of sinking the mine nor the machinery to haul the coal placed heavy demands on the mine-owner and therefore there was a proliferation of small enterprises. In 1850 there were about four hundred pits in the Black Country all operating with a fixed capital investment of less than £3000. (8) Witnesses giving evidence to Thomas Tancred for the Midland Mining Commission in 1843 maintained that mines could be reached with an outlay of capital as little as £1000, and for land sale pits, requiring little capital infrastructure, the capital required could be as low as a few hundred pounds, since these might be drained by other pits and the only substantial capital requirement was for a horse gin to wind up the coal. (9) There were of course much larger operations like that at Sandwell Park, where £150,000 had been invested by 1886, and also those mines directly controlled or let on royalty by Lord Dudley. These included mines on the outskirts of Dudley itself

like Netherton and Parkhead and the mines at Gornalwood. By the 1870's Lord Dudley's collieries were employing between 8,000 and 10,000 men and boys, but individual pits still tended to remain small. (10)

The ten-yard seam, because of its depth, required specialist techniques of extraction if output was to be maximised. Along with the small scale of production and the absence of a managerial class this had led to a specific form of labour organisation and management based on a system of subcontracting to charter-masters or *butties*. On a coalfield marked by *"fierce and unremitting competition"* where labour might be difficult to find and control, efficient and forceful management was essential. (11) The butty would engage with the mine owner to deliver the coal at a set price per ton, he would then hire the labour necessary to fulfil his side of the contract, and would use his own horses and supply the tools necessary for the job. Thus a system of production had emerged whereby the owner provided the fixed capital needed to begin extraction, while the everyday working capital was provided by the butty, who undertook to remove an amount of coal in exchange for a fixed sum of money. (12) The miner was paid for the `stint', the time agreed with the butty that it would take to cut a given volume of coal. (13) This indirect form of employment lingered on in the Black Country for the rest of the century, only declining as the industry itself did after 1875, leaving by 1908 only between 20% and 25% of Black Country colliers employed under this system. (14) Thus the miner was more or less dependent upon the butty for his continued employment and the butty for his part would seek to maximise output at minimum cost, responding only to the stimulus of profit. This inevitably led to mines being exploited as short-term ventures which ultimately proved to be uneconomical in the longer life of the coalfield. Short-term economics led to the neglect of the welfare and safety of the miners as the butties contented themselves with the most easily-got coal and used as little supporting timber as they could get away with. This method of organisation led to frequent disagreements between butty and miner over the amounts of coal cut and the rates of pay for the job, which resulted in a miner not knowing from one week to another what his take-home pay would be. This had a knock-on effect on the miners' domestic economy, and in particular, for the miner's wife it would necessitate considerable ingenuity in managing the family's variable finances from week to week. (15)

Given this essentially indirect form of management which had emerged in the nineteenth century, and the absence of any kind of rigorous inspection despite the 1850 Act, standards of safety were not high in Black Country coalmines. (16) It is no surprise therefore that large numbers of accidents were recorded, both from roof falls

and from incidents connected with primitive winding machinery and lack of shaft lining: *"haste was an essential adjunct to the butty system, and danger and death were its inevitable concomitant"*. (17)

The earliest national figures for deaths in mines relate to the years 1849-53 and were collected by the inspectorate established by the 1850 Act. (18) The figures for the three midland counties of Staffordshire, Shropshire and Worcestershire are shown in Table 2.2 below.

Table 2:2 Deaths by Violence in Black Country Coal Mines per 1000 Miners Employed 1849-53

	Explosions	Roof Falls	Other	Total
Staffordshire, Shropshire and Worcestershire	1.1	3.7	2.3	7.1
All coalfields				4.5

(19)

The three Midland counties show a rate of death considerably higher than the average for the country as a whole of between 4.5 and 5.0 deaths per thousand miners. Unfortunately it is impossible to isolate Staffordshire from the figures, let alone the Black Country, but it is unlikely that a figure lower than 7.1 deaths per thousand miners in Staffordshire is being hidden by this aggregation of the three counties. In fact, given the conditions of mining in Staffordshire it is more than likely that the figure was higher and has in fact been reduced by aggregation. It should also be remembered that in calculating these death-rates, Hair made estimates of the number of miners working in each coalfield. (20)

Evidence collected by James Mitchell for the Children's Employment Commission and Thomas Tancred for the Midland Mining Commission would seem to support the notion of a high death rate for Black Country miners, although the figures refer to a slightly earlier period. This evidence is shown in Table 2.3 below.

Mid-nineteenth century coal mines were dangerous places and those in the Black Country were among the most dangerous. The figures also show that roof-falls caused most deaths and while much of this was no doubt caused by the nature of the coal seams, neglect of safety, and timbering in particular, also played a part. (21)

Table 2.3 Deaths by Violence in Black Country Coal Mines per 1000 Miners Employed 1838-42

	Explosions	Roof Falls	Other	Total
Children's Employment Commission for 1838	0.9	3.6	2.5	7.0
Midland Mining Commission 1838-42				8.0

(22)

For the years after 1850, Church describes the evidence as a *"statistical nightmare"*, but his data series running from 1860 to 1913 does show a fall in mortality from mining accidents in the West Midlands. (23) His series is also in broad agreement with that produced by Barnsby for the Black Country which shows a fall in mortality from 8 per thousand in 1850 to 2 per thousand in 1899. The two series differ in that Barnsby's begins at a higher point and does not fall as far. (24) In 1873 Parliament was told that, while Staffordshire mines remained the most difficult and dangerous in England, there had been improvements since the passing of the Mines Regulation Act which had reduced deaths from roof falls by insisting on better timbering. (25)

While there may be broad agreement about the declining incidence of fatalities in the second half of the nineteenth century, there are some differences of emphasis. John Benson stresses the frequency of death in mines where, in Great Britain as a whole, a miner was killed every six hours and the psychological effects on the mining family of constantly living with the threat of death and injury. (26) Roy Church, on the other hand, has tried to place coalmining fatality within the context of occupational mortality in general, showing that by 1900 iron workers, agricultural labourers and general labourers all had higher mortality rates. This leads Church to the conclusion that by

1900 mining was a relatively healthy occupation. (27) Neither historian is wrong in his interpretation of the statistics for while coalminers may have been healthy, the nature of their job made death a real threat, although the frequency seems to have been declining after 1850. This decline allows Barnsby to change his description of mining in the Black Country from one in which its workers were *"murdered"* in 1850 to one in which they were merely *"killed"* by 1900. (28) Whether murdered or killed, the impact of death and injury, and the ever-present fear of death and injury on working-class family life was important for both relationships and attitudes and this will be discussed later.

John Benson also draws attention to the impact of non-fatal injuries sustained by miners and the loss of work, and therefore pay, which ensued, and for which there are no reliable statistics. Using evidence from the Durham and South Wales coalfields from the end of the century, he suggests that for every death in small-scale accidents killing less than five miners, there were about a hundred non-fatal accidents. Furthermore, he claims that evidence from the permanent relief fund movement in Lancashire and Yorkshire shows that each accident resulted in about thirty days lost work. (29) Evidence from the Black Country about non-fatal injuries in the mid-nineteenth century is scarce. Thomas Tancred reported in 1843 for the Midland Mining Commission that both he and his fellow commissioners on the Children's' Employment Commission had found it difficult to obtain statistics about accidents and deaths from either masters, doctors or coroners' inquests. Tancred did, however, obtain evidence from one colliery near Dudley where, in 1842, the 82 miners working the thick-coal seam had suffered 59 accidents of which 4 were fatal. (30) This is a much lower ratio of injuries to deaths than John Benson found later in the century. It is very likely that at this earlier period, when inspection was non-existent and relief funds were rudimentary, the vast majority of accidents went unreported and were therefore not recorded.

As well as the long-term decline of the coalfield referred to earlier which was becoming increasingly obvious in the second half of the nineteenth century, the industry was also subject to the cyclical boom and slump which had become a feature of British economic life. In the Black Country coal mining industry these cyclical swings were experienced particularly sharply since the industry was dependent for most of its market on the iron industry, an industry which was notorious for its sensitivity to the economic climate. These alternating periods of boom and slump were reflected in the wage rates paid to miners, and these are shown in Table 2.4 below.

The relative prosperity of the mid-century was replaced in the late 1850's with prolonged depression lasting more or less until the mid-1860's This in turn was replaced by a boom until 1874, during which time coal prices had very nearly doubled from 10sh. (50p.) to 19sh. (95p.) a ton. In the same period wages for the thick-seam

Table 2.4 Coal Mining Wage Rates in the Black Country 1840-95

Year	Wage Rate	% Rise /Fall
1840	3s 6d	
1845	4s 0d	*+16.6*
1850	3s 0d	*-25.0*
1855	3s 6d	*+16.6*
1860	3s 0d	*-14.3*
1865	4s 3d	*+41.7*
1870	4s 9d	*+11.8*
1875	3s 6d	*-26.3*
1880	3s 0d	*-14.3*
1885	3s 4d	*+11.1*
1890	4s 8d	*+40.0*
1895	4s 4d	*-7.1*

(31)

miners had risen from 4sh.6d. (22.5p.) to 5sh.6d. (27.5p.) a day. (32) In 1874, on the tail-end of the boom, a sliding scale had been agreed between coalmasters and the miners' unions, whereby wages were linked to coal prices, with a minimum wage of 3sh.6d. (17.5p.) a day for the thick-seam miners. (33) However, the price of furnace coal fell to 16sh. (80p.) a ton in March 1874 and wages were reduced immediately to 4sh.6d. (22.5p.) a day, falling even further to 3sh.6d. (17.5p.) by 1880 and reaching as low as 2sh.4d. (12p.) in 1882, for a nominal eight hour day. (34) Wage levels recovered from the mid-decade onwards and by the 1890's became stabilised at about 4sh.6d. a day. (35) The figures shown above and any conclusions drawn from them should, however, be treated with great scepticism. Before the sliding scale was introduced most of the wage-rate figures are, at the best, just good guesses. Barnsby

has attempted to give the figures greater accuracy by correcting them to take into account unemployment and thus produce a *real wage* index. He has summarised this by decades and it is reproduced below in Table 2.5.

Table 2.5 Real Wages in Coal Mining in the Black Country 1840-99

	Real Wages	
Decade	**Full Employment**	**Corrected for Unemployment**
1840-9	100	78
1850-9	100	92
1860-9	105	83
1870-9	113	93
1880-9	118	78
1890-9	179	140
1850= 100		

(36)

It would be wrong to extract specific detail from such figures since estimates of both wage-rates and unemployment levels have had to be made, and there is very little hard evidence about unemployment in the nineteenth century. Barnsby admits that the 1860's are *"a decade of complexity"* for which it would not be unkind to assume a large number of guesses have been made. (37) However, if the general trends are accepted, it can be said that in the second half of the nineteenth century miners' real wages in the Black Country were slowly rising with two short-term dips in periods of slump, after which there were spectacular recoveries. The second of these recoveries, beginning in the late 1880's, seems to have been longer lasting than that of the early 1870's. This assessment of coalminer wage levels broadly fits with the overall national picture of a fluctuating rise in wages compared to other competing employments, which, coupled to a substantial fall in the cost of living after 1882, led to a rise in real wages in the last years of the nineteenth century. (38)

Even if the attempts to recreate real wage-rates are accepted, it is very difficult to link them to family earnings as a whole, and therefore almost impossible to go on to use this data in any calculation of the standard of living in mining families. This is true even where the miner's wage was the main family income. In the first place it must be remembered that, where payment was by stint, daily wage rates are not always helpful in trying to assess take-home pay since it was possible for a miner to do 'ten days' in a working week of six days. (39) Secondly, the fluctuating levels of employment also cause a significant distortion of any overall calculation of earnings. Both involuntary unemployment or underemployment caused by poor trade or injury, and which sometimes lasted for months, and deliberate unemployment caused by absenteeism, affected levels of disposable income available to mining families over a period of time. (40) A more meaningful concept when trying to calculate standard of living is that of total family income, if this could be assessed for mining families. It also helps to stress the importance of the incomes of members of the family other than the primary earner. Fluctuating levels of pay for one member of the family may not have been so important in the overall level of family income. A lot would depend on how close a family was to the level of subsistence and their general habits of spending. In the circumstances that prevailed in the Black Country, especially during the years of deep depression around 1880, the availability of female employment and the levels of participation in such employment may thus become important factors in assessing family income. The levels of female employment, especially of wives and mothers, may be an indication of families trying to prevent a decline in their living standards in adverse economic conditions. The *Miners' Examiner* in 1878 reported starvation in the Black Country as a whole and in 1881 the Dudley Board of Guardians reported that in Tipton and Sedgley they had never known distress so bad. (41)

For the family economy as a whole another important consideration was the unpredictability of income. Given that geological problems could change the workplace overnight making it less productive, that temporary disabling injuries were commonplace, and that miners' wages were subject to deductions for tools and candles as well as fines for poor quality coal, it is not surprising that miners did not know what their take-home pay would be from week to week. (42) In the Black Country this problem was added to the prevailing one of relatively low earnings, compared to other mining areas. The Black Country miner did not enjoy the free housing, rent allowances, benefits and bounties paid in the coalfields of the North-East and Scotland. (43) It also seems that it was the practice of some butties to pay wages as late as 11.00 p.m. on Saturday night which not only encouraged the miners to drink while

waiting for their pay but also disrupted shopping for food by their wives. Miners had complained bitterly about this in 1843 to Thomas Tancred who had been sent to investigate mining in the Black Country following the strike of 1842, and their complaint was repeated to Seymour Tremenheere in 1859. (44) It is impossible to assess just how widespread was this practice or how quickly it declined in the second half of the nineteenth century. Certainly there is little evidence of it by the end of the century, its decline mirroring that of the butty system itself. It is reasonable to assume therefore that the timing and method of paying miners in the Black Country had become more regular and divorced from the public house by the end of the nineteenth century.

In addition to these problems concerning the unpredictable nature of miners' earnings and the payments in public houses which stem largely from the sub-contracting system, there was also the long-standing problem of `Truck'. These grievances were of course linked since the Truck shops were frequently run by the butties themselves. The miners were either paid in kind or were compelled to spend a proportion of their wages in the shop. (45) Miners falling in debt through improvidence, recklessness or the long-pay system could also obtain advances in goods from the Truck shop. This system of paying wages at long intervals could deprive miners of income for as long as sixteen weeks, during which time they were forced to exist on credit from the tommy shop. (46) Evidence given to the Midland Mining Commission shows that these shops were also run by the mine owners themselves, and that they tried to excuse themselves on the grounds that they were protecting their workforce from their inability to buy cheaply, that they were protecting improvident families from starvation, and that buying from their shops would prevent exploitation by hucksters who charged high prices. (47) One butty even went as far as saying that they were forced by the masters into using tommy to pay their men. (48) Mining families became tied by a web of credit to these shops run by mine owners or their butties, and in the shops they paid high prices for poor quality goods and shopping was often an ordeal involving a lot of waiting at very early hours of the morning in all kinds of weather. (49) For wives with husband and sons working at different pits merely obtaining the tommy involved visits to different shops: one witness to the Midland Mining Commission maintained that she knew of wives having to spend more than eight hours getting their shopping done. (50) Moreover, families enmeshed in this web were forced to sell some of their tommy to pay their rent, to buy items like vegetables which were not stocked by the tommy shop, and to have shoes mended. (51) Taken together, all these factors affecting the levels of disposable income were potential threats to the stability of mining family life in the second half of the nineteenth century.

However, it does seem from the evidence collected by Tancred in 1843 that the prevalence of Truck was not uniform across the whole of the Black Country. He maintained that it did not exist for miners to the south and west of Dudley but was limited to the northern half of the Black Country. (52) It is possible that Tancred accepted too easily the statements of butties in the southern half that Truck did not exist there and that he would have found it had he searched for it. The difference can perhaps be explained in terms of the differences in economic structure between the two halves of the Black Country with mining costs increasing and returns diminishing in the northern half of the coalfield. Tancred himself saw it in terms of the presence of the thick coal which was providing a *"great source of mineral adventure"* in the southern half of the field, while in the northern section the pressure of bad times had forced owners to resort to Truck in order to maintain their profits. (53) Tancred also expressed the hope that the practice would not spread to the whole of the area but it is very difficult to find out if his wish was fulfilled. It is tempting to assume that many of the owners in the southern half resorted to Truck as times became hard for them in the 1880's. Certainly the Correspondents to *The Morning Chronicle* between 1849 and 1851 found Truck very much alive and flourishing in the Black Country, describing it as *"the great and flagrant social and industrial evil"*, in which great ironmasters and even magistrates connived to flout the anti-Truck legislation of 1831. (54)

On the other hand, there is very little hard evidence about the extent or prevalence of Truck in the Black Country as a whole in the second half of the nineteenth century, and this is partly due to the semi-legal nature of the pratice. In 1863 a Miners' Conference in Leeds condemned the practice in South Staffordshire, adding that it only continued with the connivance of the miners themselves. (55) In 1864 an employer who was also a magistrate was taken to court for breaking theTruck Act of 1831. (56) A Parliamentary Report of 1873 recorded that truck was still to be found in the area, but only in a few mines where the shops belonged to the mine owners themselves. (57) Even as late as 1882 it was reported that many small employers in the Black Country were still using Truck as a means of payment, although it was also reported that most large employers had abandoned the practice. (58) It would therefore seems likely that it became a less prominent feature of life for most miners and indeed for the working-class as a whole, and this can only have helped to improve family life. Tancred's worst fears about the proliferation of this *"evil practice"* by the *"unscrupulous and needy"* do not seem to have been fulfilled. (59)

In one way the miners of the Black Country were better off than miners on coalfields such as the North-East, for there is no evidence of any shift system being used in the second half of the nineteenth century. The relative backwardness of the coalfield did not encourage the development of multiple shift working which denied a miner and his family a routine, a rhythm of work and of leisure to punctuate the week. In those areas operating shift systems getting up at very early hours or even in the middle of the night and sleeping during the day was never easy and must have caused enormous disruption to family life. (60) Yet even in the Black Country the miner's homecoming, in the days before pit-head baths were provided, would herald disruption for his home. He would expect a meal and a bath or at least a wash-down and preparing for this in homes without running water presented no easy task for a miner's wife. In families where there were sons working as drawers or drivers in the mine and who had different starting and finishing times to their fathers, the problem was multiplied. For a miner's wife the dirty and dusty pit work meant a constant round of washing clothes:

> *"The very nature of pit work made most women slaves, wives and daughters all."* (61)

The nature of mining family life in the Black Country was also affected by the availability and quality of the houses in which the miners lived, but the historian is faced here, not with problems of interpretation, but with a general lack of evidence. Barnsby describes the evidence as *"limited and scattered"*, and any conclusion must be tentative at best. (62) It seems that the coal owners themselves in the Black Country made no significant contribution to the housing market, whereas in coalfields in Scotland and the North-East many miners lived in houses provided by the colliery for which they worked. (63) Although there are no figures available, the Dudley estate had housed miners since the beginning of the nineteenth century and continued to do so until the 1940's, *"but there was no consistent organised attempt to exploit the demand for accommodation"*, and the leasing of land for houses seems to have been quite haphazard. (64) After 1847 the estate sold off its cottage properties, many of which were in the Gornal area. The motives for this are not completely clear but it cannot be unconnected with the growing criticism of the condition of these properties and the certainty that large sums would need to be spent to make these properties habitable. (65) It seems that a substantial number of properties were also owned by middlemen who charged high rents to their tenants while only paying nominal rents to the estate for the land on which they stood. (66) In the sale after 1847 the tenants were given the first opportunity of buying the property but it is not known how many took up this opportunity. For most miners, however, it seems that there was little

alternative to renting from private landlords and there is no reason not to think that the quality of the houses would have conformed to the norm of *"small, dark, damp, insanitary buildings"* common to the working-class in the second half of the nineteenth century. (67) Certainly the correspondent who wrote for *The Morning Chronicle* in the mid-nineteenth century had no illusions about the quality of the miners' houses in the Black Country, which belonged on the whole to small proprietors and commanded relatively high rents. They were small, badly furnished, displaying few possessions, without gardens, and would have been damp had it not been for the abundance of coal which allowed roaring fires to be kept going all the time. (68) Obviously the correspondent saw probably the worst examples of houses, and those he questioned would have been keen to point out the worst features of their houses, and he seemed to have based his comments on houses he saw in the Wolverhampton area, but he has nothing but condemnation for living conditions in the area of the Black Country he visited. Even where miners owned their own homes, and the evidence for the Black Country is scanty, it is difficult to judge whether this necessarily promoted a better quality of life than in rented houses.

Reports made on the sanitary condition of Dudley in 1852, 1871, 1874 and 1887 show that the ashpit and privy-midden system of sewage removal was woefully inadequate. (69) In 1852 William Lee had reported that privies in Dudley were often too foul to use; the Report of 1887 showed that most were still not emptied until they were full or overflowing. (70) Indeed this Report is damning about the sanitary arrangement of the whole of the Black Country. The situation was no better with regards to the supply of water. In 1852 the Dudley Water Company, which had been in existence since 1834, was still having difficulties trying to supply the whole of Dudley with water pumped from the coal mines, only about a quarter of the houses being so supplied. (71) Improvements seem to have been made by the South Staffs. Water Company and in 1887 it was reported that 85% of Dudley houses had taps and water supply was ample. (72) The same Report shows that conditions in other parts of the Black Country were not so good: in Sedgley public supply was only partial and most households still obtained their water from wells. (73)

The problem of poor housing and lack of adequate water and sewage removal facilities was made worse by overcrowding. Barnsby's work using the Census shows that there were only slight changes in the density of occupancy of houses: the figure rose from 5 per house at the beginning of the century to a peak of 5.4 in 1831 after which there was a steady fall to 5 by 1901. (74) The figures do hide possible local differences and short-term periods of intense overcrowding caused by rapid demographic change.

Moreover, it is very difficult to draw any conclusions about the quality of family life from Barnsby's figures without more information about the size of houses and the number of rooms they contained. It is easy for the historian to assume these houses had, at most, four rooms and this assumption is reinforced by the growing number of reconstructions of working-class homes in museums. The houses do indeed look small, and the cramped conditions would have made even the most common of domestic activities, like washing, *"a battle of tenacity and ingenuity"*. (75) The historian is, however, using late twentieth century eyes to view these houses, and to make judgements about them, a fact which makes problematic any attempts to reconstruct working-class attitudes to their homes, and one which, furthermore, can reveal nothing about how the home was used.

Thus it is within this context of uncertainty of life and income, the ever-present, but decreasing, threat from injury and disease, the very hardships and rigours of the job itself and the uncomfortable and crowded living space that mining family life was experienced, that relationships were forged and broken, and that attitudes were formed.

The Mining Village: Lower Gornal

Much of the discussion about the nature of the settlement at Lower Gornal in the second half of the nineteenth century will centre on the extent to which it is accurate to call it a *'mining'* village at all. This will depend to a large extent on the degree to which the village conforms to the stereotypical pattern of a mining settlement. Of what does this stereotype consist? It is generally agreed that such settlements were usually geographically isolated from other areas; that there was a large degree of social isolation in that the population was almost exclusively composed of the manual working-class; that the predominant economic activity was coalmining, with settlements often having only a single employer; and that demographically there was an imbalance in the sex-ratio in favour of young men, and in the age structure in favour of young families. In its physical appearance the settlement would be drab with a predominance of poor quality, cheaply-built housing, in which sanitation and water-supply were basic at best. Amenities like shops and churches were sparse and leisure activities were sharply demarcated by gender, based on the pub or beer-house for the miners and the home for their wives. (76) Such a stereotype or model is, of course, a construction of sociologists, and as such may be a gross distortion of the historical reality of mining communities; it is useful only as something against which to mirror

reality. By the late nineteenth century many of the worst features of the stereotype had gone anyway; perhaps it had only really existed in the bibliography, dominated as it is by the North-East and South Wales coalfields. (77)

Geographical Isolation

It is not easy trying to establish the degree of geographical isolation experienced by Lower Gornal and Gornalwood in the late nineteenth century. (78) Together they were one of nine hamlets making up the parish of Sedgley, "a large and populous parish in the centre of the great mining district of Staffordshire ...which abounds with excellent coal, ironstone, limestone , freestone and clay for bricks." (79) Lower Gornal does seem to have enjoyed independent status as a village: in 1823 it gained parochial status with its own church but its identity as a village settlement with distinctive characteristics probably dates from long before this. E.A.Underhill, referring to an earlier period, wrote of the provincialism of Staffordshire being *"most applicable to Sedgley, Coseley, and the Gornals"*. (80) The settlement was, however, only two miles from the thriving market town of Dudley which in 1851 already had a population of nearly 38,000 people. The road from Dudley to Sedgley lay to the north of the settlement and in the south the road from Dudley to Himley passed through Gornalwood. Travelling from Gornal to Dudley did, however, involve climbing steep hills and these must have formed physical barriers in the days before motor transport. David Latham maintains that even as late as 1882 the settlement at Lower Gornal was clearly separated geographically from all surrounding settlements, and that the interlinking of settlements through mutual expansion had not happened in this area. (81) The developments in transport by canal in the late eighteenth century and the subsequent nineteenth century development of the railways did not lead to any kind of opening up of Lower Gornal. Proposals to extend the canal network into the area by linking the Stourbridge Extension canal to the Birmingham canal received little support and rumours of a proposed railway between Dudley and Sedgley in 1845 came to nothing. (82)

Migration

The degree to which any community experienced isolation in the nineteenth century also depended on the level of in- and out-migration and the patterns of residence which that community experienced. In order to examine the extent of migration, birth-place

data from the census enumerators' books has been analysed. However, the accuracy of birth place data has received some severe criticism from Edward Higgs, who has doubts about the reliability of census reporting and the recording of this information. (83) The Registrar General in 1910 complained that the birthplace tables were probably the most inaccurate of any of the census tables since a lot of people did not know in which county they were born and places of birth could change so much in size. (84) Michael Anderson's research on Preston showed that 14% of this sample had a discrepancy in birthplace between the two census years of 1851 and 1861. Some of these were insignificant discrepancies, but in half of them in-migrants became non-migrants and vice versa. (85) Similar research by the Cambridge Group, referred to above, shows a similar level of discrepancy: 15.7% for the males in Colyton in Devon between 1851 and 1881. Moreover, research by P.E.Razzell has indicated that levels of discrepancies may have been higher in urban than in rural areas, reaching as high as 17% between 1851 and 1861. (86) There may also have been a tendency to report place of residence as place of birth, either because respondents simply could not remember where they were born or because of the vagaries of the Poor Law which demanded that potential recipients should prove settlement which was done through claiming birth in the parish of current residence. This would tend to reduce the amount of migration shown by the census. Another problem arises from the fact that the population census was only taken every ten years and therefore it does not show movement between Census dates. Such movements can sometimes be detected by the birthplace of children, but obviously this depends again on the degree of accuracy in reporting and recording such information about children, and can only be used for households where children are still resident.

The data for 1851 is presented in Table 2.6 below and shows the places of birth of all the heads of households who were coalminers in 1851. Long-distance migrants coming from places more than ten miles distant, represent less than 0.5% of the miners, while it only rises to 1.9% for their wives. Migration from Staffordshire outside the Black Country and from neighbouring counties accounted for 11.0% of the coalminer heads and 8.2% of wives, and most of these came from Shropshire. Short-distance migrants from within the Black Country make up 9.3% of the coalminer heads while their wives account for 6.4%. Such migration from neighbouring parishes perhaps reflects miners moving closer to their jobs. The overwhelming majority of coalminer heads and their wives, 78.5% and 83.7% respectively, are local men and women originating in the Gornals or Sedgley. (87)

Table 2.6 Places of Birth of Coalminer Heads of Household and their Wives: Lower Gornal 1851

	Heads		Wives		Totals	
Place of Birth	N	% *of heads*	N	% *of wives*	N	% *of total*
Sedgley	156	*69.6*	161	*73.2*	317	*71.4*
Gornals	20	*8.9*	23	*10.5*	43	*9.7*
Dudley (1)	4	*1.8*	6	*2.7*	10	*2.3*
Kingswinford (1)	12	*5.4*	6	*2.7*	18	*4.1*
Oldswinford (1)	2	*0.9*	1	*0.5*	3	*0.7*
Tipton (1)	1	*0.4*	0	*0.0*	1	*0.2*
West Bromwich (1)	1	*0.4*	1	*0.5*	2	*0.5*
Wolverhampton (1)	1	*0.4*	0	*0.0*	1	*0.2*
Derbyshire (2)	1	*0.4*	1	*0.5*	2	*0.5*
Shropshire (2)	16	*7.1*	11	*5.0*	27	*6.1*
Staffordshire (2)	4	*1.8*	2	*0.9*	6	*1.4*
Warwickshire (2)	3	*1.3*	2	*0.9*	5	*1.1*
Worcestershire (2)	1	*0.4*	2	*0.9*	3	*0.7*
Buckinghamshire (2)	1	*0.4*	0	*0.0*	1	*0.2*
Lincolnshire (2)	0	*0.0*	2	*0.9*	2	*0.5*
London (2)	0	*0.0*	1	*0.5*	1	*0.2*
Yorkshire (2)	0	*0.0*	1	*0.5*	1	*0.2*
Not Recorded	1	*0.4*	0	*0.0*	1	*0.2*
Totals	224	*100.0*	220	*100.0*	444	*100.0*

Notes: (1) places within 5 miles
(2) places more than 5 miles

Source: Census Enumerators' Books 1851; Registrar's District Dudley; Microfilm No. HO 1072030

Chart 2.6a

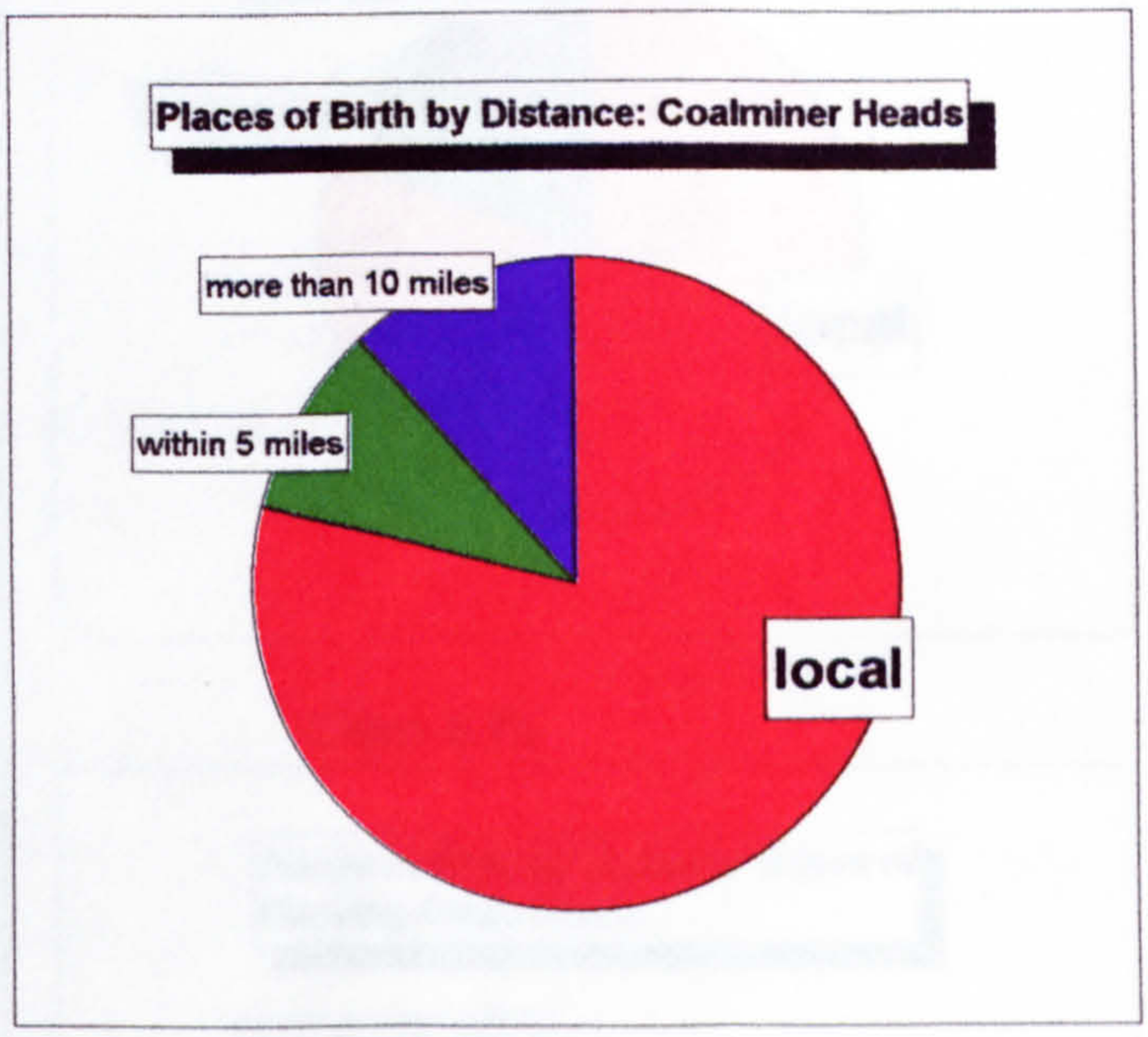


Chart 2.6b

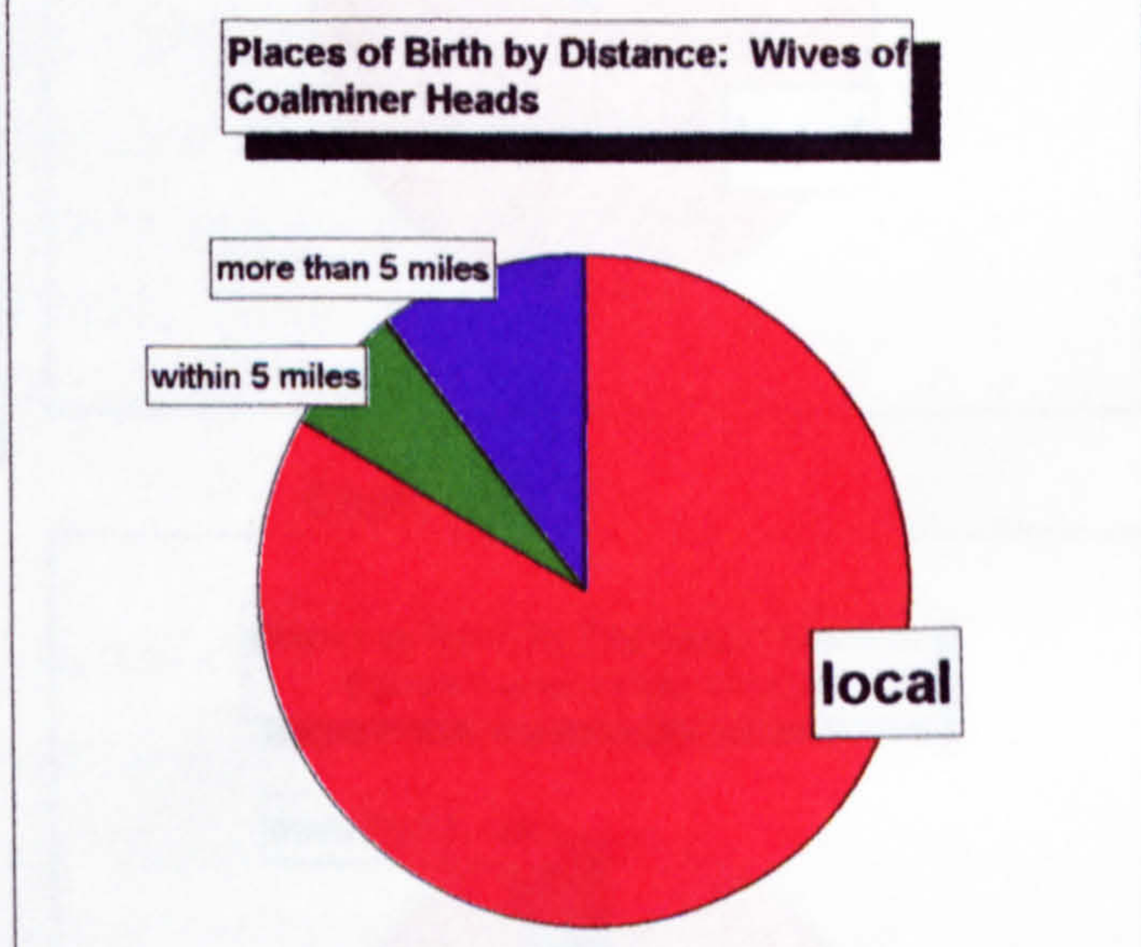


Table 2.7 Places of Birth of Sample of Working-Class Heads of Household other than Coalminers: Lower Gornal 1851

Place of Birth	Heads N	Heads % of total heads	Wives N	Wives % of total wives	Heads as Widows and single women N	Heads as Widows and single women % of heads
Sedgley	159	61.6	155	75.6	28	10.9
Gornals	13	5.0	16	7.8	5	1.9
Brierley Hill (1)	1	0.4	2	1.0	0	0.0
Dudley (1)	0	0.0	4	2.0	0	0.0
Himley (1)	2	0.8	0	0.0	1	0.4
Kingswinford (1)	11	4.3	5	2.4	0	0.0
Stourbridge(1)	2	0.8	0	0.0	0	0.0
Tipton (1)	1	0.4	2	1.0	0	0.0
Wednesbury (1)	0	0.0	1	0.5	0	0.0
West Bromwich (1)	1	0.4	0	0.0	0	0.0
Wolverhampton (1)	2	0.8	2	1.0	0	0.0
Shropshire (2)	14	5.4	7	3.4	0	0.0
Staffordshire (2)	3	1.2	1	0.5	1	0.4
Warwickshire (2)	3	1.2	3	1.5	0	0.0
Worcestershire (2)	4	1.6	1	0.5	0	0.0
Flintshire (2)	1	0.4	0	0.0	0	0.0
Lancashire (2)	0	0.0	1	0.5	0	0.0
Leicestershire (2)	0	0.0	1	0.5	0	0.0
Montgomeryshire (2	0	0.0	1	0.5	0	0.0
Wiltshire (2)	1	0.4	0	0.0	0	0.0
Not Recorded	3	1.2	3	1.5	2	0.8
Totals	221	85.7	205	100.0	37	14.3
Total Heads	258					

Notes: (1) within 5 miles
(2) more than 5 miles distant

Source: Census Enumerators' Books 1851;
Registrar's District Dudley;
PRO Microfilm No. HO 1072030

Chart 2.7a

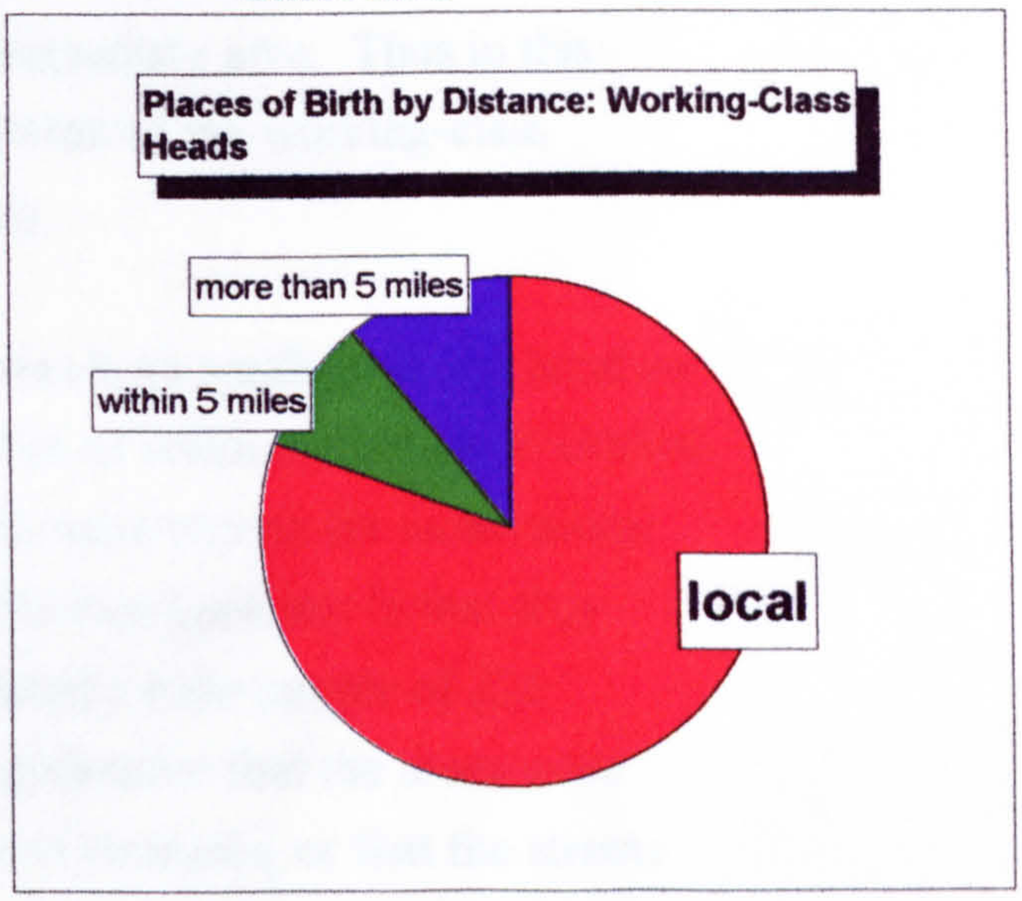


Chart 2.7b

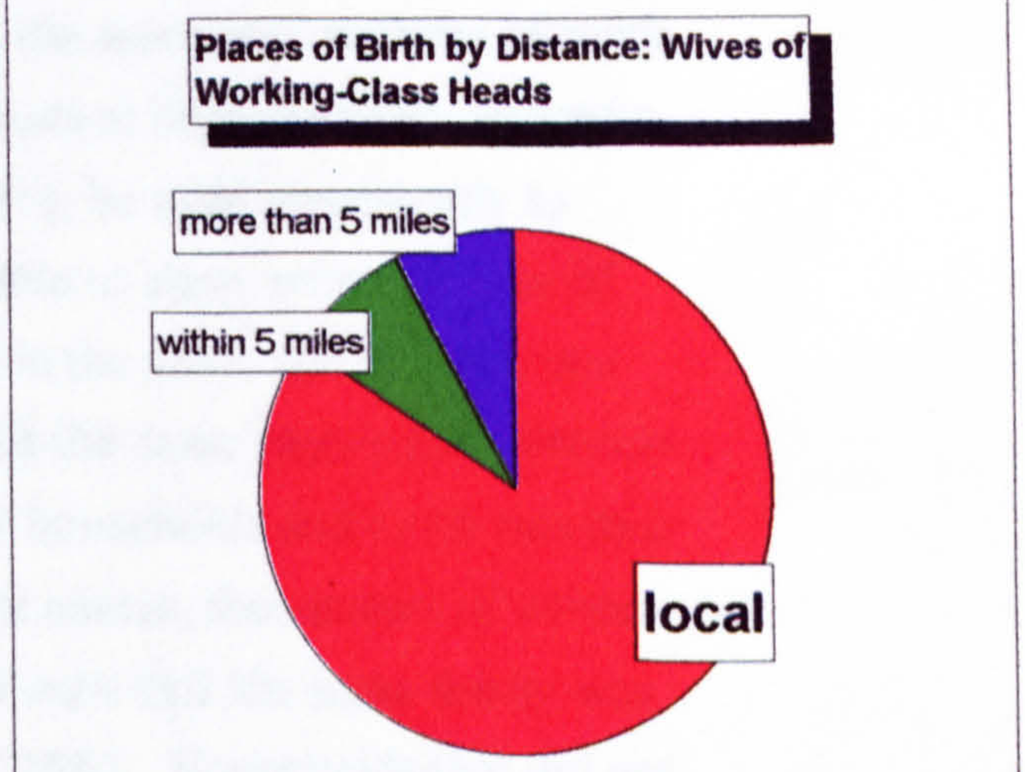
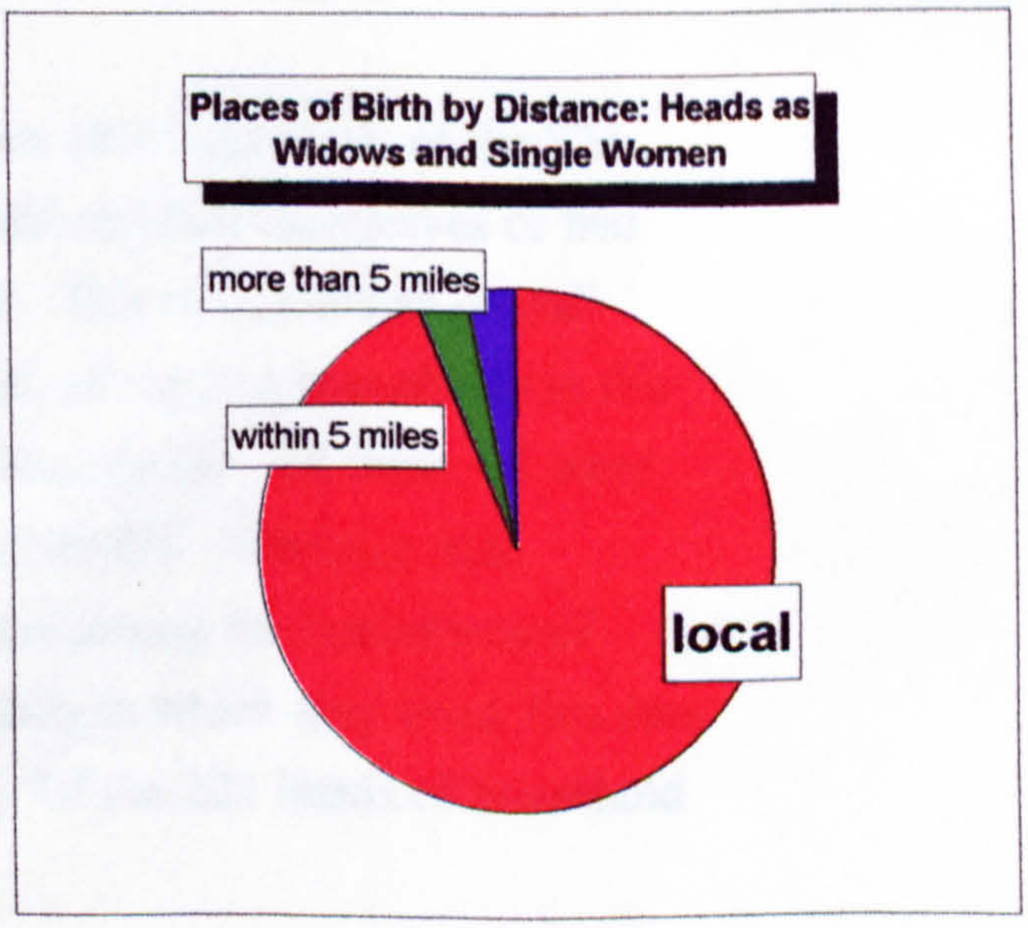


Chart 2.7c



If the examination of migration into Lower Gornal is widened to the working-class as a whole, then a similar pattern emerges and this is shown in Table 2.7 below. There had been little long-distance migration of the working-class as a whole into Lower Gornal, and again most of the working-class originated in the immediate area. Thus in this respect the coalminers conformed to the migratory patterns of the working-class generally in Lower Gornal in the mid-nineteenth century.

In order to examine further this notion that migration was both small scale and local an attempt has been made to assess the extent of persistence of residence in Lower Gornal from one census to the next. Two registration districts were chosen for examination since they appeared little changed physically between the two censuses in that they contained the same street and road names. This generated a base sample of 221 households resident in 1851. This of course does not guarantee that the areas were exactly the same, since boundaries could change between censuses, or that the streets and roads were the same at both dates. However, there was a remarkable persistence of street names in Lower Gornal through all the censuses between 1851 and 1891. It can be said, therefore, with reasonable confidence that the same area in terms of roads was looked at in both censuses. The numbering of houses at both censuses, however, was almost non-existent, and addresses cannot, therefore, be used consistently to identify specific houses. (88) Thus it will not be possible to show with a degree of confidence that there was any persistence of residence in the same houses from one census to the next. In order to make a comparison with the same registration districts in 1861 it was necessary to identify individual heads of households and to do this their surname was used in the first instance, followed by first names, then names of wives and children in order to be certain beyond reasonable doubt that the same family was being observed in both the Census of 1851 and that of 1861. Households that did not conform to these name criteria were eliminated from the comparison. This comparison yielded the data presented in Table 2.8 below.

The data shows a high level of areal persistence between 1851 and 1861: of the 221 heads of households sampled in 1851, 78 were either still resident themselves or had widows still resident in the same road or street in 1861. This represents an overall persistence rate of over one in three, 35.3%. Moreover, of the 221 households in this sample, 85 of them could be described as 'coalminer' households. Of these, 34 were still resident in some form in 1861: a persistence rate of 40.0%. Whereas Alan Campbell found a lower level of persistence of residence among the coalminers of Lanarkshire in comparison with the rest of the community in which they lived, this data for Lower Gornal shows the opposite to be true. (89) Of the 221 heads of household

Table 2.8 **Persistence of Residence in Lower Gornal 1851- 61**

	Number		% of sample	% of total households 1851
Coalminer Households				
(85 out of 221)				
Coalminers at both censuses		25	*32.1*	*11.3*
Coalminers in 1851 but not 1861 (a)		5	*6.4*	*2.3*
Widow in 1861 of coalminer resident in 1851		4	*5.1*	*1.8*
	total	*34*		
Working Class Households				
(127 out of 221)				
Other working-class at both censuses		29	*37.2*	*13.1*
Other working-class in 1851 but not 1861 (b)		7	*9.0*	*3.2*
Widow in1861 of other working-class resident in 1851		1	*1.3*	*0.5*
	total	*37*		
Others				
(9 out of 221)				
Others (c)		6	*7.7*	*2.7*
Widow in 1861 of others resident in 1851		1	*1.3*	*0.5*
	total	*7*		
(221 households in 1851)	**total**	78	*100.0*	35.3

Notes: (a) These consisted of 3 men who had other working-class occupations in 1861; and 2 who became grocers by 1861

(b) These consisted of 5 men who were coalminers in 1861; 1 had become a beer-seller in 1861; and 1 had become a contractor in 1861

(c) These consisted of 3 female heads with no occupation recorded; 1 head unable to work; and 2 retailers

Source: Census Enumerators' Books: Registrar's District Dudley No. HO 1072030 and RG 9/2047/2048

sampled in 1851, 127 of these could be described as 'working-class' but did not have a coalminer head. Table 2.8 shows that 37 of these were still resident in some form in 1861: a persistence rate of 29.1%, while the persistence rate for all those who were not coalminers, 136 households out of 221 sampled, was only 32.4%: ie. 44 households out of 36.

Thus the miners of Lower Gornal in the mid-nineteenth century, while displaying similar overall migratory habits to the rest of the working-class community, did display slightly different residence habits, tending to remain more in the same place. Two factors perhaps can be seen to account for this: in terms of residence, mining as an occupation may have tied its workers to the location of their mines more closely than would have been the case with other working-class occupations; and on a more speculative level coalminers may have sought to live amongst others who shared their occupation. The area of Lower Gornal chosen to examine persistence of residence did indeed contain a high proportion of coalminers in 1851 and therefore the data may simply reflect the reality that miners tended to live together in their tightly-knit communities and were reluctant to give this up.

By 1891 there had been some slight but significant changes in the pattern of migration and settlement, and these can be seen in Tables 2.9 and 2.10. There had still been very little long-distance migration or even migration from surrounding counties even though this might have been expected in the years after 1850 which saw an expansion of coal mining on the western side of Dudley. Instead, there had been a substantial fall in the proportion of miners coming from elsewhere in Staffordshire or the surrounding counties from 11.0% in 1851 to a mere 3.9% in 1891. This fall is also reflected in the pattern of migration and settlement among the working-class as a whole, with the proportion of male migrants from the surrounding counties falling from 9.8% in 1851 to 5.0% in 1891. Among mining families there has also been a fall in the proportion of miners coming from the surrounding parishes of the Black Country from 9.3% to 6.6%. This fall has not occurred among the rest of the working-class, the proportion rising from 8.3% to 9.7% and 7.9% to 8.0% for heads and wives respectively. This local mobility of a small group of the working-class was probably a feature common to the working-class in general in the nineteenth century as men sought new jobs and families sought cheaper or dearer accommodation according to their economic circumstances. Local evidence to support this notion is impossible to find. In 1891, as in 1851 the overwhelming majority of both miners and the working-class in Lower Gornal are local men and women. Indeed among the mining families the proportion of

Table 2.9 Places of Birth of Coalminer Heads of Household and their Wives: Lower Gornal 1891

Place of Birth	Heads N	Heads % of heads	Wives N	Wives % of wives	Totals N	Totals % of total
Sedgley	210	43.8	198	43.1	408	43.5
Gornals	213	44.5	215	46.8	428	45.6
Coseley (1)	1	0.2	2	0.4	3	0.3
Dudley (1)	12	2.5	8	1.7	20	2.1
Himley (1)	1	0.2	2	0.4	3	0.3
Kingswinford (1)	9	1.9	5	1.1	14	1.5
Pensnett (1)	5	1.0	6	1.3	11	1.2
Quarry Bank (1)	0	0.0	1	0.2	1	0.1
Tansey Green (1)	1	0.2	0	0.0	1	0.1
Tipton (1)	0	0.0	2	0.4	2	0.2
Wednesbury (1)	1	0.2	0	0.0	1	0.1
Wednesfield (1)	1	0.2	0	0.0	1	0.1
Wolverhampton (	1	0.2	0	0.0	1	0.1
Shropshire (2)	3	0.6	1	0.2	4	0.4
Staffordshire (2)	13	2.7	11	2.4	24	2.6
Warwickshire (2)	1	0.2	0	0.0	1	0.1
Worcestershire (2	2	0.4	1	0.2	3	0.3
Abroad (2)	0	0.0	1	0.2	1	0.1
Not Recorded	5	1.0	6	1.3	11	1.2
Totals	479	100.0	459	99.9	938	100.0

Notes: (1) places within 5 miles
(2) places more than 5 miles distant

Source: Census Enumerators' Books 1891; Registrar's District Dudley; PRO Microfiche 12/2291 and 12/2292

Chart 2.9a

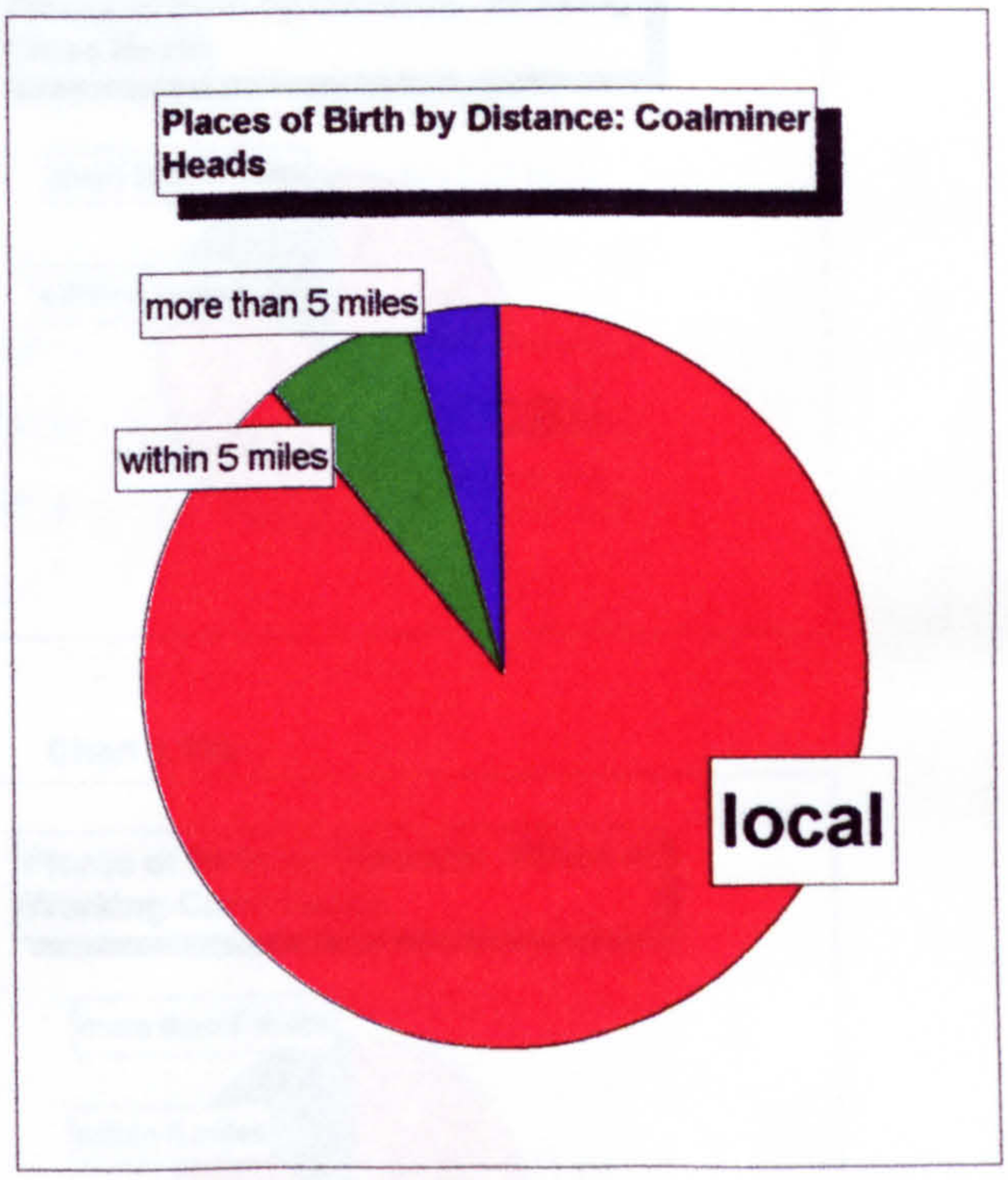


Chart 2.9b

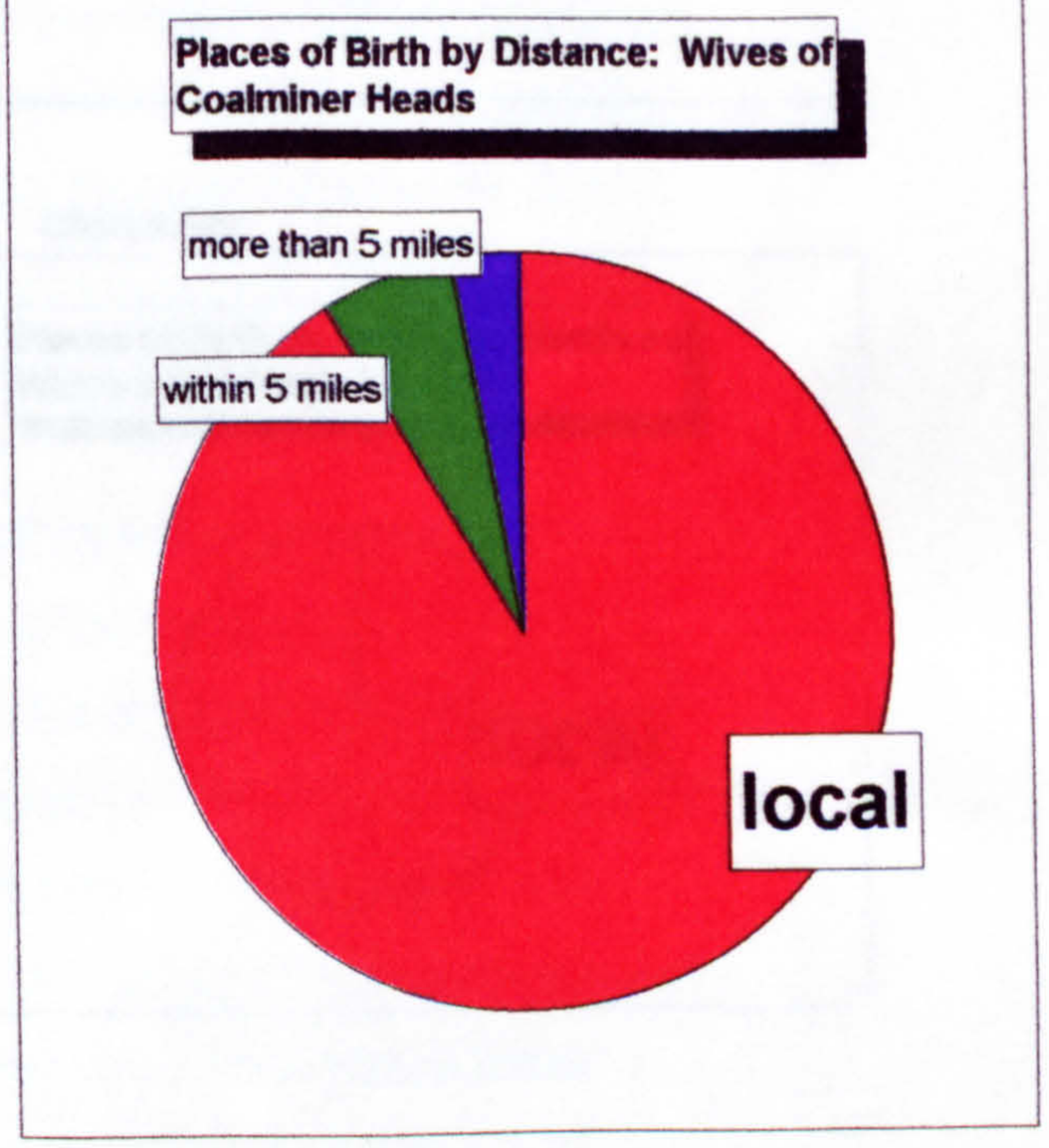


Table 2.10 Places of Birth of Sample of Working-Class Heads of Household other than Coalminer: Lower Gornal 1891

Place of Birth	Heads N	Heads % of heads	Wives N	Wives % of wives	Heads as Widows and single women N	Heads as Widows and single women % of heads
Sedgley	97	44.3	94	51.6	11	5.0
Gornals	67	30.6	63	34.6	9	4.1
Bilston (1)	0	0.0	1	0.5	0	0.0
Brierley Hill (1)	4	1.8	0	0.0	0	0.0
Coseley (1)	1	0.5	0	0.0	0	0.0
Dudley (1)	5	2.3	3	1.6	0	0.0
Himley (1)	0	0.0	1	0.5	0	0.0
Kingswinford (1)	5	2.3	4	2.2	0	0.0
Netherton (1)	1	0.5	0	0.0	0	0.0
Pensnett (1)	2	0.9	3	1.6	0	0.0
Stourbridge (1)	1	0.5	0	0.0	0	0.0
Tipton (1)	2	0.9	1	0.5	0	0.0
Wolverhampton (	0	0.0	2	1.1	0	0.0
Shropshire (2)	4	1.8	3	1.6	0	0.0
Staffordshire (2)	5	2.3	0	0.0	0	0.0
Warwickshire (2)	0	0.0	1	0.5	0	0.0
Worcestershire (2	2	0.9	4	2.2	0	0.0
Wales (2)	3	1.4	2	1.1	0	0.0
Totals	199	90.9	182	100.0	20	9.1
Total Heads	219					

Notes: (1) places within 5 miles of Lower Gornal
(2) places more than 5 miles distance fom Lower Gornal

Source: Census Enumerators' Books 1891; Registrar's District Dudley; PRO Microfiche 12/2291 and 12/2292

Chart 2.10a

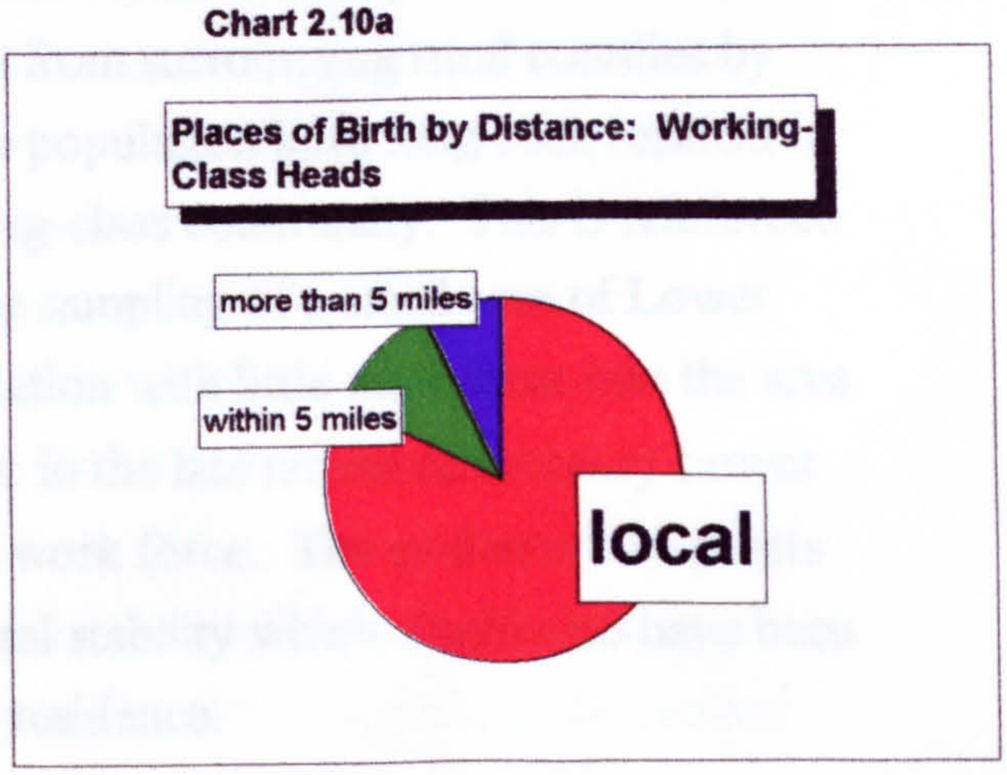


Chart 2.10b

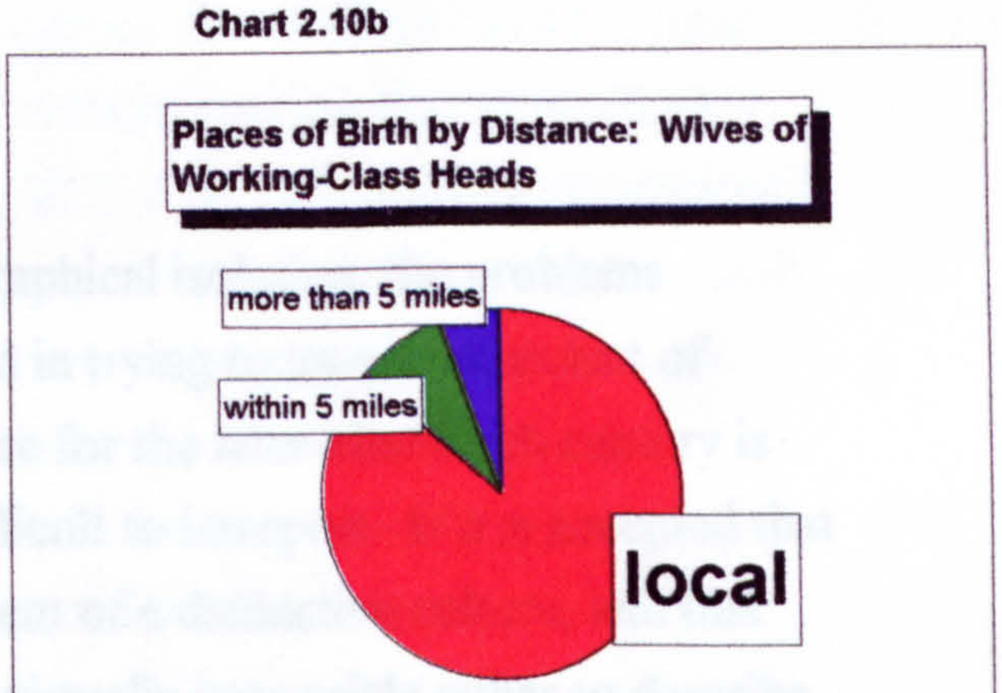
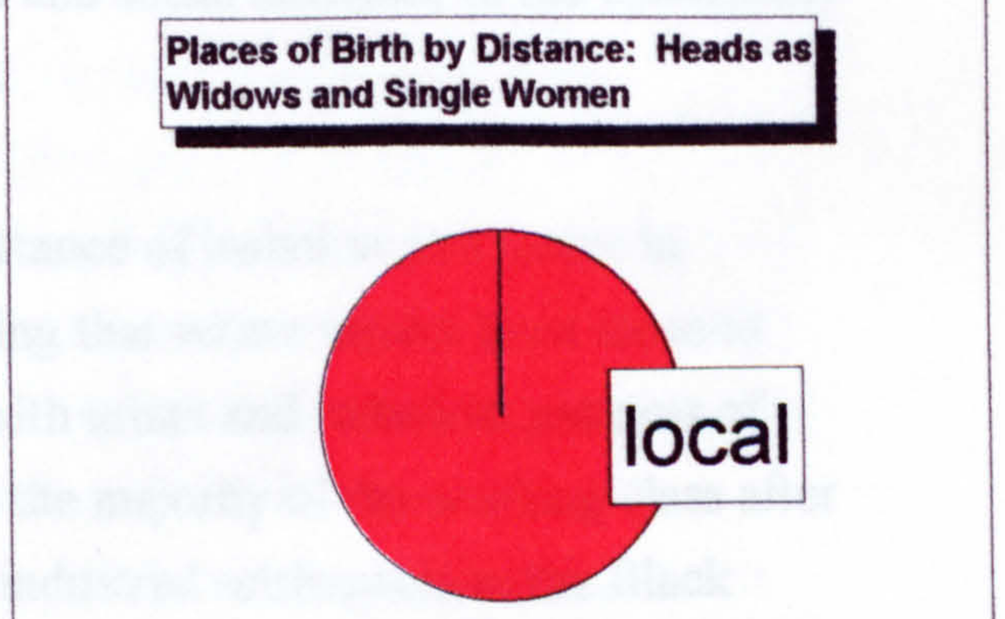


Chart 2.10c



heads and wives locally born has increased from 78.5% to 88.3% and 83.7% to 89.9% respectively.

The evidence presented in Tables 2.6 to 2.10 points to an overall pattern of limited local migration, perhaps with some in-migration from surrounding rural counties by men in search of work, while the majority of the population have long been resident in what must be seen as a settled and stable working-class community. This is reinforced by the residence pattern which emerges from the sampling of a small area of Lower Gornal. The evidence points to a degree of isolation with little movement into the area of new families or young men in search of work: in the late nineteenth century Lower Gornal was quite capable of generating its own work force. The evidence also points to a remarkable degree of social and occupational stability which would also have been concomitant with the patterns of migration and residence.

Cultural Isolation

While it is difficult to assess the degree of geographical isolation, the problems involved seem slight compared to those involved in trying to assess the extent of cultural isolation in Lower Gornal, since evidence for the later nineteenth century is sparse, largely impressionistic and extremely difficult to interpret. If it is accepted that geographical isolation can lead to the development of a distinctive culture, and that Lower Gornal was geographically isolated, it is virtually impossible either to describe the distinct culture which had emerged by the later nineteenth century, or to identify what made it different to that of surrounding settlements. For the historian to then seek a convincing causation out of the economic and social structure of the community must come close to searching for the Holy Grail.

Roy Church has also cast doubts upon the importance of isolation as a factor in creating a 'typical' mining community, maintaining that where miners lived close to urban areas they would have more in common with urban and industrial patterns of experience and behaviour which were shared by the majority of the working class after 1851. (90) Even before 1851 there were large industrial settlements in the Black Country where the miners merged with the rest of the community and were dependent on nearby towns. Moreover, new mining settlements had taken the form of linear expansion along existing lines of communication like roads. (91) This pattern of development would almost certainly have led to the extension of an already existing culture, rather than the development of distinct and separate cultures in individual

communities. The development of areas dominated by the coal mine to the exclusion of other types of occupation, and the corresponding withdrawal of the mining community from the outside world may well have been a development of the late nineteenth century in certain areas only. (92) The movement of labour in and out of mining may well have ensured that miners were integrated with other industrial workers in any particular location. (93) This could easily have been the pattern of development in Lower Gornal in the late nineteenth century.

Social Structure

While the degree of isolation of Lower Gornal may be in dispute, the social structure is somewhat easier to determine since it consisted mostly of the manual working-class. In this thesis it is assumed that the notions of class and class-consciousness were common currency by 1850, even though Conservatives continued to talk of *'ranks'* and *'orders'* in the second half of the nineteenth century and the *Quarterly Review* apologised for using the word *'class'* as late as 1869. (94) Although prime ministers like Peel would have nothing to do with the language of class, by the mid-nineteenth century social critics, economists and politicians were talking increasingly in class terms. As early as 1828 the classes of society were already being defined by the amount of property possessed by the individuals who made up those classes. (95) At first, most of those who used the term 'class' were probably not too specific about what it meant, except that they were aware that the old notions of attachment and connection which had marked pre-industrial society, were breaking down. (96) By the time of the Reform Act of 1832 the distinction between middle and working classes was clearly being made on economic grounds and to radical pamphleteers it was only too obvious that the working classes did not receive that to which they were legitimately entitled. (97) Edward Thompson, of course, would argue that in the years between 1780 and 1832 most English working people *"came to feel an identity of interests as between themselves, and as against their rulers and employer"*. (98) Certainly, during the 1830's, which saw the rise of both the Co-operative and Chartist Movements, the view was being proclaimed with increasing force now, that the *'working class'* were independent from the middle class, and by the time Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels were writing in the turbulent 1840's it may have been very realistic to view society as splitting into two hostile camps: the bourgeoisie identified by its possession of the means of production; and the proletariat, by its lack of the same. (99)

The years after 1850 perhaps saw a softening of these divisions as the social antagonisms themselves softened and new emphasis was placed on individual mobility between classes; on the difficulty of establishing where class boundaries lay; and on the significant divisions which existed within the classes themselves. (100) These problems of blurred class boundaries and internal divisions within the working class can pose many problems for historians using Census evidence to establish social structure. In particular, it is necessary to establish which criteria are being used to differentiate between classes, and modern sociologists are divided about the relative importance of occupation, income level, education, or access to power structures as indices of social class. Some would argue that the notion of class is a purely subjective set of feelings which give people a sense of identity while at the same time excluding others; others would argue that class is a legitimate notion to explain the different relationships of groups to the means of production, but that this does not explain different positions in a status hierarchy, which are reflections of the esteem in which different groups are held by the rest of society. (101)

Since all theories of class recognise that occupation is an important indicator, it is acknowledged as a working model for this Thesis that class divisions are taken to have arisen from the economic divisions of an industrialised society; that economic status can be measured by the degree of ownership of the means of production, distribution or exchange; and that occupation can be used as a rough measure of economic status. In other words a basic Marxist definition of class will be used: in that an individual's social class is determined by the source of his income. The source of an individual's income, and by and large his status, will be determined by his occupation and therefore occupation will be used as an indicator of social class, and this is the best that can be done.

The occupational information recorded by the census is thus of fundamental importance for reconstructing nineteenth century society but, while on the one hand it is a comprehensive source, there are a number of problems associated with its use. Until 1891 householders were not asked to indicate the paid economic activities of the members of their households, but to give their *Rank, Profession or Occupation*, and this could imply merely a definition of personal status rather than of industry or employment. (102) This will not cause serious problems for the analysis of social class in this thesis since it is not essentially concerned with tracing the boundaries between the gradations of class groups but with establishing the overall nature of the community from the occupations of its inhabitants. Nor should the different assumptions made by individual enumerators as to what constituted an occupation

create any problems since, in general terms, using the full-time paid work of men to establish broad occupational structure and therefore social structure should not lead to any serious errors of interpretation. (103)

Minor problems can emerge in trying to decide whether, for example, a shoemaker was essentially a maker of shoes or a dealer in shoes, since the definition of working-class discussed above is not really helpful in classifying such occupations; perhaps the broader aspects of with whom an individual lived, worked, played and prayed would have to be taken into account in order to establish class in such cases. Problems may also arise from assigning social class to a household according to the occupation of the, usually male, household head since the prosperity of a particular household may have been determined by the total family income and the number of mouths it had to feed. However, in both Lower Gornal and Cradley it would seem somewhat perverse to describe the households of the predominantly manual workers as anything other than working-class, even though they may have contained both working wives and children and enjoyed relatively high levels of prosperity. In using occupation to establish social class in this Thesis, only those of the heads of households have been taken into consideration since none of the households classified as working-class by occupation of the head, appear to need re-classification based on the economic activities of the co-residing group. Where the sampling technique selected female heads of household with no recorded occupation, these were not used, even though other evidence from the co-residing group in the household would have led to the assumption that the household was working-class.

Of the 936 separate occupiers issued with Census papers in 1851, only 79 can be designated as being other than working-class using the distinctions discussed above. (104) These households represent a mere 8.4% of the total and are shown in Table 2.11 below. The majority of the non-working-class households are haded by retailers and dealers but the problems of using occupation to define social class become immediately obvious. Many of the retailers classified as non-working-class were possibly of the type of *"penny"* capitalists discussed by John Benson: working-class men seeking freedom from the routine of paid employment by opening corner shops or women striving to supplement the inadequate family wage by opening shops in the front rooms of their homes. (105) Further difficulties emerge with the group of engineers since many of these would almost certainly have been engine drivers operating winding gear at coal mines and therefore working-class. Shoemakers have been classified as working-class on the grounds that they were manual workers, but

Table 2.11 **Occupation or Status of Non-Working-Class Heads of Household: Lower Gornal 1851** (a)

Occupation or Status	Number	% of total non-working class house-holds	% of total households
Retailer, Dealer, Merchant	33	*41.8*	*3.5*
Engineer	11	*13.9*	*1.2*
Licensed Victualler, Publican, Beer-Seller	8	*10.1*	*0.9*
Farmer	7	*8.9*	*0.7*
Clerical, Insurance, Tax, Post-Office	4	*5.1*	*0.4*
Contractor	4	*5.1*	*0.4*
Clergy	3	*3.8*	*0.3*
Coal Master	3	*3.8*	*0.3*
Teacher	3	*3.8*	*0.3*
Manager	1	*1.3*	*0.1*
Manufacturer	1	*1.3*	*0.1*
Surgeon	1	*1.3*	*0.1*
Totals	**79**	***100.0***	***8.4***

Notes: (a) The problems involved in deciding which categories of occupation can be designated as non-working-class in 1851 are discussed in the text

Source: Census Enumerators' Books; Registrar's District Dudley; PRO Microfilm No. HO 1072030

this is tenuous since they may also have been retailers of shoes and thus performing an entrepreneurial function. Deciding whether shoemakers earn their living from making the shoes or from the profit on the sale of the shoes is impossible from the Census evidence and the makeup of the rest of their families has to be used to decide their classification. Similar problems arise from the occupation of bricklayer and similar criteria have been applied. In the Census of 1891 some shoemakers and bricklayers are shown as employing other men, and in such cases have been excluded from the working-class sample.

Professional men make up a very small proportion even of the middle class in Lower Gornal in 1851. Harold Perkin writes of the birth of class being a process of two-way alienation: as the working-class was freeing itself from dependence and obedience, so the higher ranks were rejecting their roles of protection and responsibility. (106) Thomas Carlyle wrote of the *"abdication on the part of the governors"* in his essay on Chartism in 1839, (107) and Seymour Tremenheere was very critical of the lack of a middle-class presence in much of the Black Country in the 1840's and 1850's. (108) It is, of course very difficult to decide which members of the middle class would have exerted this role of protection and responsibility spoken of by Perkin above: who were the *'governors'* in a community like Lower Gornal in the mid-nineteenth century, and would they have been seen as such by both themselves and the working class as a whole? Perhaps of the 936 households in Lower Gornal in 1851, a maximum of sixteen, or 1.7% of the total, would fall into this category, and would include the contractors, clergy, coalmasters, teachers, and the manager, manufacturer and surgeon. This categorisation leaves out farmers, clerical workers and the difficult category of engineers since it is very difficult to establish at which end of the social spectrum they lay in 1851, and they all lacked homogeneity as occupational groups. Could such a small group of professional middle class heads and their families have exercised much influence at all, even assuming it had the ability and desire to do so?

Even where the middle class was present in a community in greater strength, it could easily abdicate its responsibility to the working class, especially when it conflicted with financial self-interest. However, the lack of physical presence, as was the case in Lower Gornal, might certainly have cut off the community from almost all the protection and responsibility which the middle class might have exerted. Conversely, of course, the presence of just a few middle class households may have exercised an influence out of all proportion to their numerical strength, depending on the individual household members and their standing and status within the community and their willingness to accept the role and responsibility of protector. Recovering such

evidence for a community like Lower Gornal in the 19th century is impossible, and conclusions must be speculative.

By 1891 there had been little change in social structure, as is shown in Table 2.12. Only 9.3% of households can be designated as other than working-class, a slight rise of 0.9% compared to 1851. Again, the majority are headed by retailers and dealers while there is a slightly larger professional middle-class presence: perhaps 25 or 2.0% out of the total households being so designated. Given the reservations expressed above, this group would have been unlikely to have exerted much influence: Lower Gornal was throughout the second half of the nineteenth century a predominantly working-class community with a small middle-class presence.

Occupational Structure

Assessing the importance of coalmining in the settlement is no easy task. Colliers from Lower Gornal were recorded in the Sedgley registers as early as 1657, although until the mid-nineteenth century metal-working was probably more important. A list of the trades in Sedgley in 1832 show 66 miners and colliers compared with 189 nailers and 60 screw forgers. (109) By 1873, White's directory describes the inhabitants as being chiefly miners and nailmakers, but in Kelly's Directory of 1896 it is fireclay and brickmaking which are highlighted, although the Directory does admit to the existence of some collieries in the area as well as some metal-working. (110) As the north-eastern sector of the coalfield was beginning to be abandoned after 1860, the south-western sector grew in importance. The chief centres of production became the Netherton, Lye and Old Hill districts on the one hand and Himley on the other, where the Earl of Dudley's collieries alone employed about 700 men. (111) It seems likely that coalmining became more important in the area as the nineteenth century progressed, but that by the end of the century, it was in decline:

> *"Gornal was, from about 1850 onwards, almost purely a mining village and had more pits, pubs and chapels, in that order, than any other place of its size in the country."* (112)

This impressionistic evidence leaves one in no doubt that Lower Gornal was a mining village in the late nineteenth century. Michael Haines' model of a mining community was discussed in the last chapter. He defined a coal mining district as one where 10% or more of the males aged twenty and over were occupied in the industry. (113) The

Table 2.12 **Occupation or Status of Non-Working-Class Heads of Household: Lower Gornal 1891** (a)

Occupation or Status	Number	% of total non-working class house-holds	% of total households
Retailer, Dealer	56	*48.3*	*4.5*
Publican,Beer-Seller Licensed Victualler	16	*13.8*	*1.3*
Clerical,Insurance Tax,Post-Office	8	*6.9*	*0.6*
Teacher	6	*5.2*	*0.5*
Farmer	6	*5.2*	*0.5*
Manager	4	*3.4*	*0.3*
Contractor	4	*3.4*	*0.3*
Clergy	3	*2.6*	*0.2*
Pawnbroker	3	*2.6*	*0.2*
Police	2	*1.7*	*0.2*
Coal Master	2	*1.7*	*0.2*
Solicitor	1	*0.9*	*0.1*
Farm Bailiff	1	*0.9*	*0.1*
Malster	1	*0.9*	*0.1*
Manufacturer	1	*0.9*	*0.1*
Nail Master	1	*0.9*	*0.1*
Railway Inspector	1	*0.9*	*0.1*
Totals	**116**	***100.0%***	***9.3%***

Notes: (a) the problems involved in deciding which categories of occupation can be designated as non-working-class in 1851 are discussed in the text

Source: Census Enumerators' Books 1891; Registrar's District Dudley; PRO Microfiche 12/2291 and 12/2292

importance of coalmining as an occupation in Lower Gornal in the second half of the nineteenth century can be seen in Table 2.13 below.

Table 2.13 Coalminers as a Proportion of the Population in Lower Gornal 1851-91

	Coalminers	% of male pop.	Coalminer Heads of H/holds	% of Heads of H/holds	Ratio of Coalminers to H/holds	Ratio of Coalminers to Coalminer Households
1851	556	*23.1*	224	*23.9*	0.59	2.49
1881	673	*21.7*	406	*34.3*	*0.56*	1.66
1891	889	*27.7*	479	*38.0*	0.70	1.86

Sources: Census Enumerators' Books 1851: Registrar's District Dudley; PRO Microfilm No HO 1072030
Census Enumerators' Books 1881; Registrar's District Dudley; PRO Microfilm No 11/2873/2874
Census Enumerators' Books 1891; Registrar's District Dudley; PRO Microfiche 12/2291/2292

In Lower Gornal in 1851 there were 556 men and 2 women working in coal mining. These 556 miners represent 23.1% of the male population. Moreover, out of the 936 separate occupiers recorded by the Census, 224 were coalminers, a figure representing 23.9% of households. By 1891 coalmining had increased in importance as an occupation with 27.7% of the male population and 38.0% of the heads of household respectively being employed in it. This quantitative data reinforces the impressionistic evidence that coalmining was an important occupation and that its importance was increasing after 1850.

The ratio of miners to total households and to coalminer households in particular throws an interesting light on the notion of miner density in Lower Gornal in the second half of the nineteenth century. The ratio of miners to households shows only a slight increase between 1851 and 1891 from 0.59 to 0.70, reflecting the increase in the number of resident miners of 59%, while the number of households only increased by 34%. The ratio of miners to coalminer households, however, shows a fall from 2.50 to

1.86 per household, reflecting the massive increase in the number of coalminer households, at 113%, between 1851 and 1891. Given the low rate of in-migration, the young miners of Lower Gornal were choosing to settle in Lower Gornal and establish new households at a rapid pace towards the end of the nineteenth century, a reflection, perhaps, of the improved economic situation as food prices fell and wages rose. (114) This evidence also supports the notion that Lower Gornal was a settled and stable community in the second half of the nineteenth century with new households being formed, perhaps, by existing members of the community and thus continuing those attitudes and patterns of behaviour already prevalent in the community.

This is not to say, however, that Lower Gornal was a single occupation settlement or that it was dominated by a single employer. Tables 2.14 and 2.15 reveal a diverse occupational structure in 1851 and 1891. A sample of coalminer heads of household have been included in this table to assess their relative importance. In 1851 the largest single occupational group among these heads was composed of labourers, in itself a somewhat generalised category embracing many kinds of work and levels of skill in different industries, while coalminers formed the second largest category. By 1891 coalminers formed the single largest occupational group, having pushed the labourers into second place, reinforcing the conclusions drawn from the number of coalminers in Lower Gornal in 1891. Other types of mining, like ironstone and clay, are less well represented in 1891 compared to 1851 with decreases from 11.2% to 2.3% and 1.2% to 0.3% respectively, a reflection of the declining importance of these industries in the second half of the nineteenth century.

The domestic nailmaking industry also suffered severe decline in this period and this is reflected in the occupational structure of Lower Gornal, with a fall from 11.2% of heads of household to 4.5% between 1851 and 1891. The antiquarian F.M.Hackwood, writing in 1898, maintained that nailmaking was a decaying industry and had been for the last twenty-five years because of competition from machine-made nails and from rival nail-making areas like Halesowen, and because the cheap labour of children was no longer available now that they had to attend school. (115) Perhaps, therefore, it is remarkable that there were still so many heads of household recorded as nailmakers in the Census. If the sample is examined more closely, however, it can be seen that of the fourteen, nine were women and of these nine, eight were widows, and for these women there were probably few alternatives to trying to eke out a living from a dying domestic industry assisted by whatever daughters were still living with them at home. The male nailmaker heads were all old in 1891, some probably no longer working: the industry was truly in its death throes, far removed from the days when it

Table 2.14 **Occupations of Sample of Working-Class Heads of Household: Lower Gornal 1851** (a)

Occupation	Number	% of sample households (b)	% of sample households excluding coalminers (c)
Labourer	110	*32.4*	*42.6*
Coalminers	81	*23.9*	
Ironstone miner	38	*11.2*	*14.7*
Nailmaker	38	*11.2*	*14.7*
Pauper	10	*2.9*	*3.9*
Agricultural labourer	8	*2.4*	*3.1*
Bricklayers	8	*2.4*	*3.1*
Iron Worker	8	*2.4*	*3.1*
Blacksmith	6	*1.8*	*2.3*
Cordwainer	5	*1.5*	*1.9*
Housewife,mother or widow	5	*1.5*	*1.9*
Limestone miner	4	*1.2*	*1.6*
Carpenter	2	*0.6*	*0.8*
Brickmakers	2	*0.6*	*0.8*
Servant	2	*0.6*	*0.8*
Washerwoman	2	*0.6*	*0.8*
Boatman	1	*0.3*	*0.4*
Chainmaker	1	*0.3*	*0.4*
Charwoman	1	*0.3*	*0.4*
Cooper	1	*0.3*	*0.4*
Haulier, Carter	1	*0.3*	*0.4*
Huxter	1	*0.3*	*0.4*
Mason	1	*0.3*	*0.4*
Shoemaker	1	*0.3*	*0.4*
Unemployed	2	*0.6*	*0.8*
Totals	**339**	*100*	*100.0*

Notes: (a) A sample of 1 in 3 working-class households was taken

(b) A notional 1 in 3 of the coalminer households were added to the sample of working-class households to give a total working-class sample ie 224/3 + 258 = 339

(c) These figures are calculated excluding the notional sample of 81 coalminer households

Source: Census Enumerators' Books 1851; Registrar's District Dudley; PRO Microfilm No. HO 1072030

Table 2.15 **Occupations of Sample of Working-Class Heads of Household: Lower Gornal 1891** (a)

Occupation	Number	% of sample households (b)	% of sample households excluding coalminers (c)
Coalminers	96	*31.2*	
Labourer	75	*24.4*	*35.4*
Bricklayers	25	*8.1*	*11.8*
Iron Worker	15	*4.9*	*7.1*
Nailmaker	14	*4.5*	*6.6*
Engine driver	13	*4.2*	*6.1*
Clay miner	9	*2.9*	*4.2*
Agricultural Labourer	9	*2.9*	*4.2*
Carpenter	8	*2.6*	*3.8*
Ironstone miner	7	*2.3*	*3.3*
Brickmakers	7	*2.3*	*3.3*
Gardener	3	*1.0*	*1.4*
Housewife,mother or widow	3	*1.0*	*1.4*
Washerwoman	3	*1.0*	*1.4*
Chainmaker	3	*1.0*	*1.4*
Shoemaker	3	*1.0*	*1.4*
Haulier, Carter	2	*0.6*	*0.9*
Pauper	1	*0.3*	*0.5*
Limestone miner	1	*0.3*	*0.5*
Servant	1	*0.3*	*0.5*
Mason/Stone-cutter	1	*0.3*	*0.5*
Dressmaker	1	*0.3*	*0.5*
Traveller	1	*0.3*	*0.5*
Tripe cleaner	1	*0.3*	*0.5*
Gas fitter	1	*0.3*	*0.5*
Groom	1	*0.3*	*0.5*
Safe maker	1	*0.3*	*0.5*
Plate layer	1	*0.3*	*0.5*
Locomotive driver	1	*0.3*	*0.5*
House painter	1	*0.3*	*0.5*
Totals	**308**	***100.0***	***100.0***

Notes: (a) A sample of approximately 1 in 5 working-class households was taken ie. 212 households. Within these, there were 6 multiple households making a total of 218 separate households

(b) A notional 1 in 5 of the coalminer households were added to the sample of working-class households to give a total working-class sample ie (479/5)= 96 + 212 = 308

(c) These figures are calculated excluding the notional sample of 96 coalminer households ie. 212 households

Source: Census Enumerators' Books 1851;Registrar's District Dudley; PRO Microfiche 12/2291 and 12/2292

employed 5,000 in Sedgley alone. (116) The occupational data does support the emphasis given in Kelly's Directory of 1896 to brickmaking, with an increase from 0.6% to 2.3% of the heads of household falling into this category in 1891. The new emphasis on ironworking is borne out by an increase in ironworker heads from 2.4% to 4.9% between 1851 and 1891. The increase in the number of bricklayers and carpenters, from 2.4% to 8.1% and 0.6% to 2.6% respectively, probably reflects the increase in housebuilding in the second half of the nineteenth century, although it is very difficult to find any evidence to support this. (117)

In conclusion it can be said that Lower Gornal's occupational structure shows it to have been a working-class settlement dominated increasingly after 1851 by coalmining, while there remains throughout the second half of the nineteenth century a strong presence of other working-class occupations. Despite the dominance of coalmining, it is very difficult to ascertain the degree to which the industry was dominated by a single employer. Certainly the influence of the Earls of Dudley cannot be ignored even though the amount of coal mined from estate pits fell by over 40% from 1871 to 1899, while the number of pits at work on the estate fell from 109 in 1867 to 31 in 1890, and the number of men employed fell from 25,000 in 1865 to 14,000 in 1900. (118) After the depression of the mid-1880's, as production costs increased, the estate began to reduce the scale of its coalmining enterprise in favour of leasing and extracting royalties but income from leased mines did not exceed revenue from estate-operated pits until 1900. (119) Thus a single employer like the Earl of Dudley with numerous mines at Himley might exert considerable influence over an adjacent coalmining settlement like Lower Gornal in the second half of the nineteenth century. Such influence is by its very nature extremely difficult to quantify, and the mechanisms by which it was exerted in the economic, political and social life of the settlement are not easy to trace. Moreover, the miners of Lower Gornal, like miners elsewhere, had access to pits run by other owners, made easier by improvements in transport in the second half of the nineteenth century. Evidence about the influence of other coal employers in the area is entirely non-existent.

Amenities

Certainly Lower Gornal had an abundance of pubs and beer-houses, twenty-three being listed in White's Directory of 1873 for a population of just over 6000. (120) This was a ratio of one pub for every 230 persons or about one for every 65 males over fifteen. There is no reason to suppose that there was any significant diminution of

the facilities provided by the "iniquitous public house" by the end of the century, but its importance in working-class life may have been exaggerated by some historians keen to show the homogeneous nature of mining settlements. (121)

There were also many churches and chapels which would probably have helped to reinforce a sense of community and exerted an influence affecting the pattern of life and leisure. On the outside it might appear that the importance of religion in the lives of the working class was declining in the second half of the nineteenth century, but some of the oral evidence appearing in the last twenty years seems to indicate that religion perhaps played a bigger part in working class communities than had formerly been assumed. Parents sent their children to Sunday School and at least paid lip service to the power of the church in the social environment. More importantly, the churches provided a wide range of social services, and most people organised their lives, at least on the surface, around a rough approximation to practical Christianity. (123)

It is, of course, impossible to quantify this influence and impressionistic evidence is equally elusive. Certainly the Anglican church was enlarged in 1837 and again in 1849, 1863 and 1888; the Methodists had two places of worship from 1841 and this had increased to three by 1896; while other denominations were well represented in the area. (124) It is, however, very difficult to get a clear impression of how much the coalmining, or working class population in general, were really affected by religion and the church. The Vicar of Sedgley, giving evidence to the Midland Mining Commission in 1844, complained of the difficulties in maintaining schools through the lack of sufficient numbers of the gentry in his parish; the inability to obtain *"proper persons as teachers"* in his Sunday School; and the lack of sufficient clergy to visit all his congregation. (125) In a very revealing passage of his evidence he stated that, *"We do not know what is going on among them"*. While he may have known virtually nothing about the people among whom he ministered, he was at least generous enough to describe them, if somewhat patronisingly, in as kind a light as possible:

> *The colliers . . . are a simple-minded good-hearted sort of* people. (126)

In 1850, Seymour Tremenheere, amidst a fairly damning description of the miners of the Black Country did admit that there was no lack of religious feeling among them, and this had subdued the more violent elements of their character, while it had not endowed them with moral restraint. (127) He did find evidence, however, that the

miners could understand little of what they heard in church because of their lack of education. (128)

David Latham, using the evidence of the 1851 Religious Census, maintains that the high level of attendance at worship was enhanced by the *"uniformity and responsiveness"* of Lower Gornal brought about by its relative homogeneity and isolation which allowed the effective communication of feelings, attitudes, expectations and ideas. (129) While it may be accepted that there was above the national average attendance at worship in 1851, it is impossible to reconstruct the social composition of the congregations and therefore it is impossible to know who was enjoying the spiritual amenities provided by the religious bodies in Lower Gornal. Moreover, since the Religious Census was not repeated, it is very difficult to trace any pattern of change, if there was one, during the second half of the nineteenth century. Certainly, in 1853, the Reverend W.Vance, Vicar of Coseley, bemoaned the fact that *"nearly two-thirds of the labouring population . . . live apparently in the total abandonment of religious duties"*. (130) Coseley may, of course, have been different to Lower Gornal in the mid-nineteenth century.

It is also very difficult to reconstruct the social mechanisms which existed to communicate those feelings, attitudes, expectations and ideas usually associated with a sense of community, both to the working class and within the working class. Certainly the coalminers of Lower Gornal might meet together to listen to their leaders, as they did in December 1863 when they met in the church school room to hear a report of the Miners' Conference which had just been held in Leeds. (131) At this Conference the editor of the *Spirit of the Times* had been impressed by the *"constant struggle of the miner's mind to reach a higher intellectual and moral position in the social scale"*. (132) However, when in January 1864 a meeting of miners was called to hear about the Miners' Benefit Association, it was poorly attended and the speaker resorted to urging the miners to give up their drunken habits. (133) Even as late as 1882 attempts to set up a Provident Society for Miners in South Staffordshire which would help lessen the destitution facing families after injuries and deaths, and which would be administered by the miners themselves, had made little progress. (134) Thus it is difficult to assess the degree to which the working class were receptive to the cultural values which may have been present in their community.

Assessing the quality of working-class housing is notoriously difficult, and Lower Gornal is no exception in this respect, due, for the most part, to the fact that most evidence is that of outside middle-class observers. In 1842 Richard Horne, a sub-

commissioner of the Children's Employment Commission, gave his literary skills full flight in his description of Lower Gornal:

> *I never saw one abode of a working family which had the least appearance of comfort or of wholesomeness, while the immense majority were of the most wretched and sty-like description.*
>
> (135)

He found that everything which would normally have been thrown onto a dung heap was thrown from the houses into the roadway outside *"the low hovels, hutches and workshops, resembling little black dens"*, and that compared to this some of the worst streets in Wolverhampton would appear civilised, *"if not respectable"*. (136) In describing the houses he saw in Lye at a later point in his visit to the Black Country, Horne made a pointed comparison with Lower Gornal, singling it out as being the worst place he had ever seen. (137) Unfortunately Horne makes no attempt to make distinctions between different kinds of working-class housing, caused in part perhaps by the overwhelming revulsion he felt at its poor quality generally, and in part by the fact that he was specifically looking at the nailmakers when he visited Lower Gornal. Nailmakers were struggling to make a living throughout the second half of the nineteenth century, and this would have been reflected in the quality of their houses. The sub-commissioner who was specifically looking at coalmining, James Mitchell, did not visit Lower Gornal, and thus it is not possible to draw any conclusions about the specific quality of coalminer houses from this particular Report. As for the layout of the settlement, maps dating from the 1880's show that the pattern of housing in Lower Gornal did not resemble that found elsewhere, resembling a *"dreary collection of box-like cottages, arranged in monotonous rows, each identical with the next"*. (138) The housing in Lower Gornal was not regimented but spread at quite low density along the roads, mostly in the form of single terraces with gardens. (139) However, in 1875 the Chairman of the Lower Sedgley Board, in replying to a Report on the sanitary condition of the area made by Dr.Ballard in 1874, referred to the workers' homes as "dogholes not fit for habitation", and expresssed the need for them to be swept away, but he also realised that this was impossible since no alternative provisions for the inhabitants could be made. (140)

Had there been any improvement in housing conditions by the end of the century? In the 1891 Census the number of rooms occupied by each household, if less than five, was recorded for the first time, and the data can be used to reinforce much of the impressionistic evidence. This data for both coalminer and other working-class households can be seen in Table 2.16 below.

There are, of course, problems with the reliability and use of the data. In 1891 the householder was responsible for providing the information about the number of rooms being occupied by the household and the space on the schedule in which the return had to be made was not very conspicuous. This must have led to incomplete returns through omissions. (141) In the Lower Gornal samples, however, this only

Table 2.16 Number of Occupied Rooms in Coalminer and other Working-Class Households in Lower Gornal 1891

	Coalminer Households		Working Class Households	
Number of Occupied Rooms	N	% of Sample	N	% of Sample
Five or more	10	2.1	8	3.7
Four	180	37.8	80	37.0
Three	160	33.6	75	34.7
Two	112	23.5	49	22.7
One	3	0.6	2	0.9
Not recorded	11	2.3	2	0.9
Totals	476	99.9	216	99.9

Source: Census Enumerators' Books 1891; Registrars' District Dudley; PRO Microfiche 12/2291 and 12/2292

amounted to 2.3% of the coalminer and 0.9% of the working class households: such small proportions are unlikely to skew the results significantly. It is impossible to estimate the amount of deliberate over- or under-recording of rooms, but there is no reason to think it would have been extensive, and therefore there is no reason to conclude that this would seriously distort the Census information. George Barnsby does make the point that, since overcrowding was a legal offence, some heads may have defined a 'room' very liberally. (142) The schedule, however, only required information from households occupying less than five rooms and there was no attempt to define a 'room'. It is therefore impossible to ascertain how much space each

household had since rooms would vary in size, and it is possible that some households recorded as having five or more rooms actually had very little habitable and useable space, and were therefore very overcrowded. These problems thus serve to add to the problems which surround the definition of the 'household' in the nineteenth century Census returns which will be discussed later in this thesis. In the Census returns for 1891, where there are two heads recorded on a schedule, and it is assumed this indicates two households sharing the same house, the number of rooms is frequently shown divided between the two co-residing groups. But even in these shared houses, it is impossible to discover how much space was given to each of the co-residing group within the house as a whole, or whether some of the rooms were common to both groups, with the division reflecting sleeping arrangements only. Where households were shared and there was no division of the rooms, it is absolutely impossible to recover the amount of space available to each of the co-residing groups. Thus households may have been severely overcrowded in part only, while other groups within the same household may have enjoyed more adequate living space.

Given the limitations on the use of the data discussed above, and no way of recovering missing information, the data does largely speak for itself. Only a small proportion of the working class, 3.7%, and an even smaller proportion of the coalminers, 2.1%, lived in households with more than four occupied rooms. The vast proportion of the working-class accommodation in Lower Gornal in 1891 consisted of four or fewer rooms available for occupation: 95.5% of the coalminer households, and 95.3% of the working class sample. Indeed, well over half of both the coalminer and working class accommodation consisted of three rooms or less. The most common size appears to be three or four rooms available for occupation, and this would seem to accord with the impressionistic evidence discussed above depicting housing as wretched in the main.

Comparison with the rest of the Black Country is difficult. George Barnsby, using the aggregate 1891 Census figures, produced data which shows that 64.5% of all houses had less than five rooms, with a range from 52% in Wolverhampton, to 86% in Quarry Bank. (143) These figures were, of course, obtained from aggregate Census totals and are not occupation- or class-specific like those discussed in this Thesis. The very small one-up-one-down house, or single storey-two room house, appears to be common in Lower Gornal in 1891, with 24.1% of the coalminer and 23.6% of the working class generally having accommodation of less than three rooms. Barnsby's figures show 10.8% of the Black Country households in this category in 1891. (144) Thus in terms of the accommodation available to both the coalminers and the working class in Lower Gornal in 1891, it was smaller than for the Black Country as a whole,

and there is no difference between that enjoyed by coalminer households and other working-class households.

Does this mean that the houses in Lower Gornal in 1891 were overcrowded? Tables 2.17 and 2.18 below compare the number of occupied rooms with the number of people sharing them in both coalminer and other working class households shown as occupying less than five rooms by the Census enumerators in 1891.

Table 2.17 Density of Occupation in Coalminer Households in Lower Gornal 1891

Number of Occupied Rooms	Number of Households	Number of People Occupying	% of sample population	Mean per Household
4	180	1135	41.2	6.3
3	160	923	33.5	5.8
2	112	494	17.9	4.4
1	3	9	0.3	3.0
Totals	**455**	**2561**	**92.9**	**5.6**

Source: Census Enumerators' Books 1891; Registrars' District Dudley; PRO Microfiche 12/2291 and 12/2292

The figures make stark reading. Nearly all of the coalminer population, 92.9%, lived in households with no more than four occupied rooms, while over half, 51.7%, lived in households with three or fewer occupied rooms. The data shows a mean density for coalminer households of less than five rooms of 5.6 persons, with a much higher density of 6.3 persons per household in the four-room households in 1891. These mean figures do, of course, hide individual households which contained a large number of people: as high as thirteen persons in four rooms, eleven persons in three rooms, and one example of eight persons in a house with two occupied rooms.

Like the coalminers, the vast bulk of the working class population, 94.3% of the sample, lived in households with no more than four occupied rooms; and, again, over half of the sample working class population, 54.1%, lived in no more than three rooms. However, there was a significant difference in the density of occupation, with a mean difference of 0.5 persons per household, between the coalminer figure of 5.4 persons and the figure of 4.9 persons in the working class households. This represents quite a substantial difference and may have had important consequences for the quality of working class domestic life in general, in terms of the pressure on space, amenities and comfort within the home. The more intangible and elusive effects on relationships

Table 2.18 Density of Occupation in Working Class Households in Lower Gornal 1891

Number of Occupied Rooms	Number of Households	Number of People Occupying	% of sample population	Mean per Household
4	80	434	40.2	5.4
3	75	377	34.9	5.0
2	49	204	18.9	4.2
1	2	3	0.3	1.5
Totals	**206**	**1018**	**94.3**	**4.9**

Source: Census Enumerators' Books 1891; Registrars' District Dudley; PRO Microfiche 12/2291 and 12/2292

within the home, both between husband and wives and between parents and children, can only be imagined.

Again, comparison of overcrowding with the rest of the Black Country is difficult. Barnsby has made a somewhat dubious attempt to calculate the degree of overcrowding in the Black Country as a whole by comparison with standards laid down by the Housing Act of 1957, and has even devised a category and definition of what he calls *"gross overcrowding"*. (145) Table 2.19 below attempts to compare the data obtained from the working class in Lower Gornal in 1891 with Barnsby's figures for the Black Country as a whole, using his methodology.

The figures are consistent with with the range of figures calculated by Barnsby for other Black Country towns, with Lower Gornal at the higher end of the range, with 35% of the coalminer and 25% of the working class households being overcrowded using his definition. In other words, both the coalminer and working class households in Lower Gornal in 1891 suffered from more than average overcrowding compared

Table 2.19 Overcrowding in Lower Gornal and the Black Country 1891

	% of total population	
	Overcrowded (a)	Grossly Over-crowded (b)
Lower Gornal (Coalminer H/Holds)	35%	15%
Lower Gornal (Working class H/Holds	25%	17%
Bilston (c)	36%	18%
Dudley (c)	29%	23%
Smethwick (c)	16%	8%
Stourbridge (c)	19%	10%
Walsall (c)	23%	14%
West Bromwich (c)	31%	17%
Wolverhampton (c)	18%	9%

Notes: (a)The definition of overcrowding used by Barnsby is:
1 room . . . more than 2 persons sleeping
2 rooms . . . more than 3 persons sleeping
3 rooms . . . more than 5 persons sleeping
4 rooms . . . more than 7.5 persons sleeping

(b)The definition of gross overcrowding used by Barnsby is:
1 room . . . more than 3 persons sleeping
2 rooms . . . more than 5 persons sleeping
3 rooms . . . more than 7 persons sleeping
4 rooms . . . more than 9 persons sleeping

Sources: G.Barnsby, op.cit., pp.97-8
Census Enumerators' Books 1891; Registrars' District Dudley;
PRO Microfiche 12/2291 and 12/2292

with the rest of the Black Country. More interestingly, the coalminer households appear to be more overcrowded than the rest of the working class in Lower Gornal, with over one in three of the coalminer population living in overcrowded houses. The causes of this differential will be examined later in the Thesis.

These conclusions about overcrowding cannot be left without an attempt to put them into a broader nineteenth century context. Perhaps the most serious criticism of any calculations made around, and any conclusions arising from a twentieth century definition of overcrowding, is that it may simply be irrelevant to our understanding of the nineteenth century experience of overcrowded living conditions.
The household of William Beardmore from North Street in Lower Gornal, by any definition, must have found its living space extremely overcrowded. William and his wife Sarah were thirty-eight and thirty-seven years old respectively and they shared their home with eleven children ranging from their fifteen year old son Josiah, who like his father was a coalminer, to their recently born daughter, Phoebe at three months old. Only three of the children were at school and therefore out of the house during the day and this left Sarah with three young children to look after as well as three coalminers in the family to service. And all this had to be done in just three rooms.
The four roomed house at number 23 Church Street was home to Absolom and Hannah Jones and their family of three; but the house was also shared with Henry and Sarah Middleton and their three children; and lodging with these two independent households was a twenty-two years old married visitor and her one year old daughter. We cannot know why these groups were sharing accommodation: none were in-migrants from outside the bounds of Lower Gornal itself; Henry Middleton may have sought temporary accommodation to be close to the mine at which he worked; alternatively, he may have been Absolom's brother-in-law; the lodger may have been the daughter of either head, but where was her husband? We know nothing of the relationships which existed between these co-residing groups, or of those between the individual members of the groups, except that whatever relationships did exist were enjoyed, worked- out, endured, and may have been both supportive and possibly destructive within the confines of the four-roomed house which was home to them all. Did the three mothers in this house cooperate over mundane matters like cooking and washing, or were these occasions for tension, conflict and rivalry?

We do not really know what a nineteenth century Black Country working-class wife and mother thought about her living space and whether she considered it adequate for her needs. We assume from the evidence of the Census that she found her living conditions overcrowded and cramped and that this added to the difficulties of the daily

round of washing, cleaning and caring for her family, and may have caused strained relationships from time to time. We should, however, always be aware of the thin evidential base on which we reconstruct much of this nineteenth century working class social life.

Water supply was a constant problem in Lower Gornal throughout the nineteenth century with much of the supply coming from springs and wells which were often polluted, caused in part by the habit of throwing everything into the street, and referred to above, and it seems that there had been little improvement by the 1870's. (146) Even when water was supplied by the South Staffordshire Waterworks Company, it proved very difficult to get private landlords to connect their houses to the supply. (147) In 1867 Sedgley set up a Local Board and the minutes of the monthly meeting reveal a growing concern for the low level of public health in the area. In 1876 the death rate in Sedgley was as high as 28 per 1000, although this was unusually high, and the Medical Officer of Health complained of a general inadequacy of water supply and although resolutions were passed to sewer, level and pave the streets of Lower Gornal, little was actually done. Expenditure on night soil removal indicates the rudimentary nature of sewage removal in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. (148) Later in the same year the Medical Officer categorically linked infectious disease with areas of poor sanitary arrangements and stressed the dangers resulting from open cesspools. (149) In succeeding years, areas of Lower Gornal were singled out for special criticism and the Medical Officer became almost eloquent in declaring that *Pale Piece* was the worst area he had seen and that not even smallpox would cross its threshold. (150) The situation had become so bad by 1878 that the streets had become impassable due to the filthy conditions.

In such conditions it is no surprise that disease spread very rapidly: an epidemic of scarlet fever in 1880 and typhoid in 1881 caused a temporary rise in the level of mortality, while whooping cough, enteric fever, phthisis, bronchial pneumonia, diphtheria and typhus were rarely absent. (151) Throughout these years infant and child mortality remained high, often reaching more than 50% of the total deaths recorded. (152) Such a high level of mortality was, however, offset by a high birth rate which reached 49.7 per 1000 in January 1878. (153)

It is easy to use the evidence to paint a black picture of the mining settlement of Lower Gornal and even easier to fall into the trap of singling out such working-class communities as bleak wildernesses where life was nasty, brutish and short but there is no reason to believe that Lower Gornal was any unhealthier or enjoyed worse housing

than other working-class settlements and, at least, it seems to have avoided the back-to-back squalor and dire poverty common in Dudley during this period. (154)

The Metalworking Settlement: Cradley

The original settlement of Cradley lay on the steep southern slope of the valley of the river Stour, midway between Stourbridge and Halesowen. It seems that the original settlement was in the steep sided valley between Homer Hill and Colman Hill and close to the river. (155) It can be said at the outset that it was not a coalmining village in the nineteenth century in the sense that Lower Gornal most definitely was. This is not to say, however, that coal was not present in the area since both Cradley and Cradley Heath lie in a coal basin to the east of the Netherton dome. (156) Cradley, however, approximately marks the southernmost limit of the South Staffordshire coalfield at which the coal was easily accessible in the nineteenth century but the first edition of the One-Inch Ordnance Survey published in 1834 shows at least two coal mines further south than Cradley, at The Hayes and at Hawne near to Halesowen. (157) In the late nineteenth century coalmasters were very keen to find out the depth of the Thick Coal seam as it faulted and disappeared south of Cradley and there were trial borings as far south as Manor Lane, two miles to the south-east, and Wassell Grove, about two miles to the south-west of Cradley. The seams discovered by these borings at depths up to 921 feet showed the legendary Thick Coal to have shrunk to less than five feet. (158) Little of any lasting value came of these explorations. Although nineteenth century mining techniques allowed depths of over 1000 feet to be reached and coal to be extracted profitably, this would have involved a scale of investment in coalmining only previously risked by owners like Lord Dudley. In the second half of the nineteenth century the mines in existence became even more susceptible to flooding since the flow of water was generally southwards and more and more mines to the north were abandoned. (159)

There is abundant evidence that the area was once connected with the iron industry. Yates's map of the county of Stafford published in 1775 clearly showed the importance of iron making along the valley of the river Stour between Halesowen and Stourbridge, with Congreve Forge, Troyal Forge, Cradley Forge, Slitting Mill and Lie Forge all shown. (160) The industry had been given a fresh impetus in the 17th century when the technique of slitting iron into rods was introduced by Richard Foley at the Hyde iron works in Kinver. (161) Slitting mills sprang up along the river Stour and its tributary, Smestow brook, and during Foley's lifetime the river Stour was

reputed to be the busiest stream in England. (162) At Cradley itself in the early 17th century there was a water driven forge operated by Dud Dudley, the illegitimate son of Lord Dudley. It was here probably that he made his famous experiments using coal to smelt iron, although a similar claim is made for his iron works at Himley. (163)

The early 19th century was the period of Cradley's rapid growth as an industrial area. The iron made by these various undertakings on the Stour and its tributaries was used in the Halesowen and Cradley areas for making nails, and in Cradley Heath for making chains. Both were practised throughout the area as domestic industries, although by the mid-nineteenth century nailmaking factories had begun to supersede the domestic production of nails. (164) The nailmaking industry had reached its peak by 1830 when it is generally thought it employed about 50,000 workers. After this the market for hand-made nails fell due to competition from Belgium and from increased mechanisation: the first steam-powered cut-nail factory was opened in Birmingham in 1811. (165) The consequence in the Black Country was that the industry became more and more marginalised as it was no longer secure for men and became a source of supplementary income for female labour. It is thought unlikely, however, that the iron industry in the Black Country would have expanded as it did in the 19th century without the huge capital accumulated by the nailmakers. (166) As the domestic industry collapsed the nailers drifted into a diverse range of metal industries, including the manufacture of tubes, prams, bedsteads, fire-irons, anvils, boilers, edge tools and drop forgings. (167)

The chainmaking industry was even more localised than nailmaking, being almost exclusively sited in Cradley Heath in the second half of the 19th century. As industry in Cradley developed rapidly at the end of the 18th century, squatter settlements of nailmakers and chainmakers sprung up on the northern slopes of the Stour valley. These merged together to form Cradley Heath, which by 1900 had rapidly outstripped the original settlement of Cradley in size and scale of industrial activity. (168) By the 1860's in Cradley Heath there were about 200 men and boys employed in chain factories, making the heavy chains used on ships, and perhaps some 300 domestic shops employing another 2000 men. women and children, making lighter chains. (169) Calculating the relative importance of nailmaking and chainmaking in the area as a whole is very difficult. One local writer, referring to the 1901 Census, claimed that of the 761 households in Cradley, 37% made chains while 28% made nails. (170)

Geographical Isolation

It is unlikely that Cradley was in any way as isolated as Lower Gornal appeared to be in the 19th century. The manor of *Cradelei* is recorded in the Domesday Book and it is likely that it was an important manor in the middle ages because of its streams running into the river Stour, its fertile soil, and the discovery of clay and coal in the area. Cradley did not become an independent ecclesiastical parish until 1841, later than Lower Gornal, but its individual identity was established long before this. (171) The settlement was almost midway between the important and thriving towns of Stourbridge and Halesowen and was well served by the busy road passing between them which had been turnpiked since 1727, and on which coaches ran between Stourbridge and Birmingham until 1850. (172) In the early 1890's Cradley was also linked to Stourbridge, Dudley and Wolverhampton when the Oxford, Worcester and Wolverhampton Railway was finally extended into the Stour valley. (173).

Migration

The view that Cradley was not an isolated settlement in the 19th century is also supported by the evidence about patterns of migration which emerge from the Census. The data for the coalminer heads of households is presented in Table 2.20 below, but it must be remembered that the number of coalminer heads in Cradley in 1851 was very small relative to the total and therefore any inferences made from this data are based on a very small sample. However, a very different picture emerges than that for Lower Gornal in 1851 when the overwhelming majority of the heads and their wives were locally born, revealing a settled community of coalminers with few permanent newcomers and therefore relatively closed to outside social and cultural influences. In Cradley, on the other hand, only 15% of the coalminer heads were local men, and while another 40% were from within a five mile radius, there was a substantial proportion, 45%, from distances greater than five miles. A slightly different picture is apparent among their wives with a greater proportion, 35%, being locally born, with a smaller proportion, 25%, from distances greater than five miles. This reveals a pattern of in-migration by men, probably in search of work, some of whom would have migrated with their wives, but also a substantial proportion of whom would have found their wives among Cradley born women. It may thus be inferred from this that Cradley was a much more open settlement than Lower Gornal and therefore likely to be exposed to a wider range of social and cultural influences.

Table 2.20 Places of Birth of Coalminer Heads of Household and their Wives: Cradley 1851

Place of Birth	Heads N	Heads % of heads	Wives N	Wives % of wives	Totals N	Totals % of total
Cradley	3	15.0	7	35.0	10	25.0
Brierley Hill (1)	0	0.0	1	5.0	1	2.5
Dudley (1)	2	10.0	0	0.0	2	5.0
Kingswinford (1)	0	0.0	1	5.0	1	2.5
Lye (1)	1	5.0	1	5.0	2	5.0
Netherton (1)	1	5.0	0	0.0	1	2.5
Oldswinford (1)	2	10.0	1	5.0	3	7.5
Quarry Bank (1)	0	0.0	1	5.0	1	2.5
Rowley Regis (1)	2	10.0	3	15.0	5	12.5
Dorset (2)	1	5.0	0	0.0	1	2.5
Gloucestershire (2)	1	5.0	0	0.0	1	2.5
Herefordshire (2)	1	5.0	1	5.0	2	5.0
Kent (2)	0	0.0	1	5.0	1	2.5
Liverpool (2)	1	5.0	0	0.0	1	2.5
Shropshire (2)	3	15.0	1	5.0	4	10.0
Worcestershire (2)	2	10.0	2	10.0	4	10.0
	20	**100.0**	**20**	**100.0**	**40**	**100.0**

Chart 2. 20a

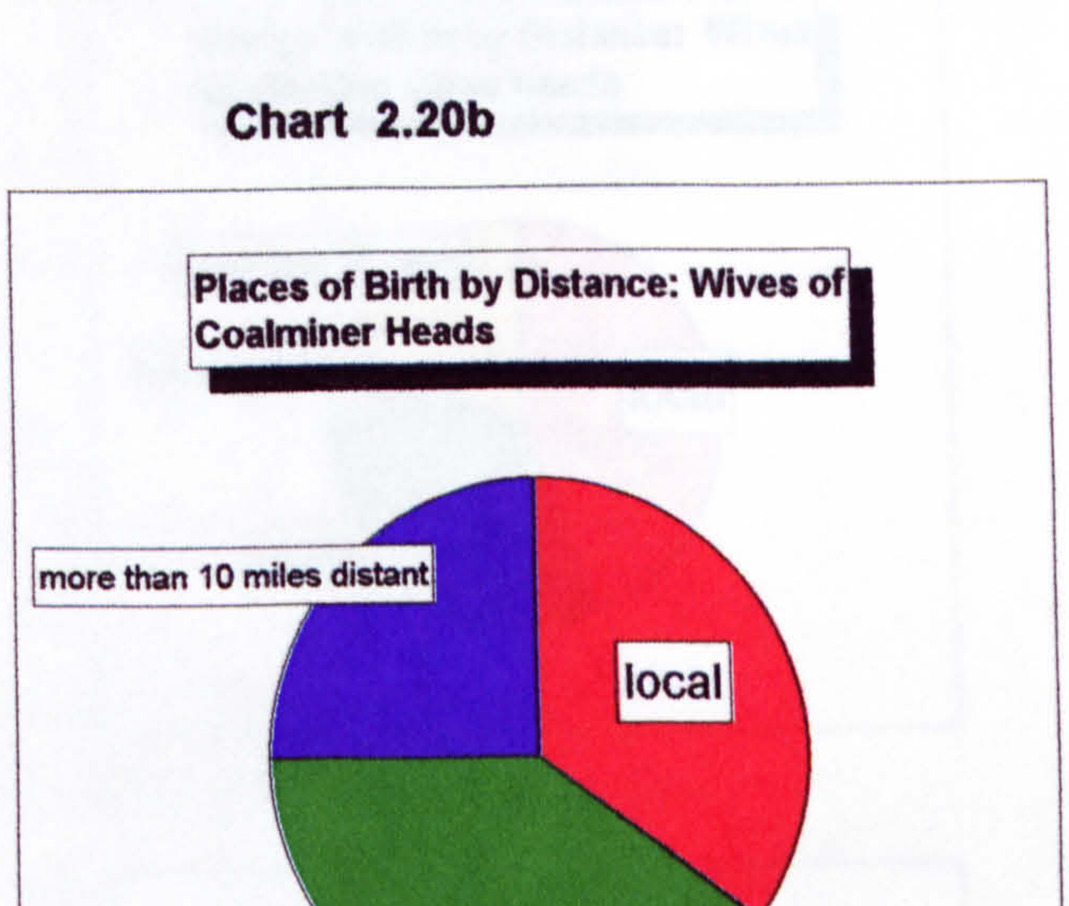


Chart 2.20b

Notes:
(1) Places within 5 miles
(2) Places more than 5 miles distant

Source:
Census Enumerators' Books; Registrar's District Halesowen;
PRO Microfilm No. 1072034

Table 2.21 **Places of Birth of Sample of Working-Class Heads of Household other than Coalminers: Cradley 1851**

Place of Birth	Heads		Wives		Heads as Widows and single women	
	N	% of total heads	N	% of total wives	N	% of heads
Cradley	48	43.6	46	44.7	6	54.5
Brierley Hill (1)	1	0.9	0	0.0	0	0.0
Brockmore (1)	1	0.9	0	0.0	0	0.0
Clent (1)	2	1.8	1	1.0	0	0.0
Dudley (1)	4	3.6	4	3.9	0	0.0
Halesowen (1)	7	6.4	7	6.8	2	18.2
Kingswinford (1)	1	0.9	1	1.0	0	0.0
Lye (1)	4	3.6	3	2.9	0	0.0
Netherton (1)	0	0.0	1	1.0	0	0.0
Oldbury (1)	0	0.0	1	1.0	0	0.0
Oldswinford (1)	5	4.5	6	5.8	0	0.0
Rowley Regis (1)	6	5.5	10	9.7	1	9.1
Stourbridge (1)	1	0.9	0	0.0	0	0.0
Bilston (2)	0	0.0	1	1.0	0	0.0
Birmingham (2)	1	0.9	1	1.0	1	9.1
Bromsgrove (2)	1	0.9	1	1.0	0	0.0
Enville (2)	0	0.0	1	1.0	0	0.0
Wombourn (2)	1	0.9	0	0.0	0	0.0
Essex (3)	1	0.9	0	0.0	0	0.0
Hereford (3)	2	1.8	1	1.0	0	0.0
Leicestershire (3)	2	1.8	2	1.9	0	0.0
Monmouthshire (3)	1	0.9	0	0.0	0	0.0
Nottinghamshire (3	0	0.0	1	1.0	0	0.0
Shropshire (3)	2	1.8	2	1.9	0	0.0
Somerset (3)	1	0.9	0	0.0	0	0.0
Staffordshire (3)	4	3.6	1	1.0	0	0.0
Surrey (3)	0	0.0	1	1.0	0	0.0
Warwickshire (3)	0	0.0	1	1.0	0	0.0
Worcestershire (3)	12	10.9	9	8.7	1	9.1
Yorkshire (3)	2	1.8	1	1.0	0	0.0
Totals	110	100.0	103	100.0	11	100.0

Notes: (1) Places within 5 miles
(2) Places within 10 miles
(3) Places more than 10 miles distant

Source: Census Enumerators' Books 1851; Registrar's District Dudley; PRO Microfilm No. HO 1072030

Chart 2.21a

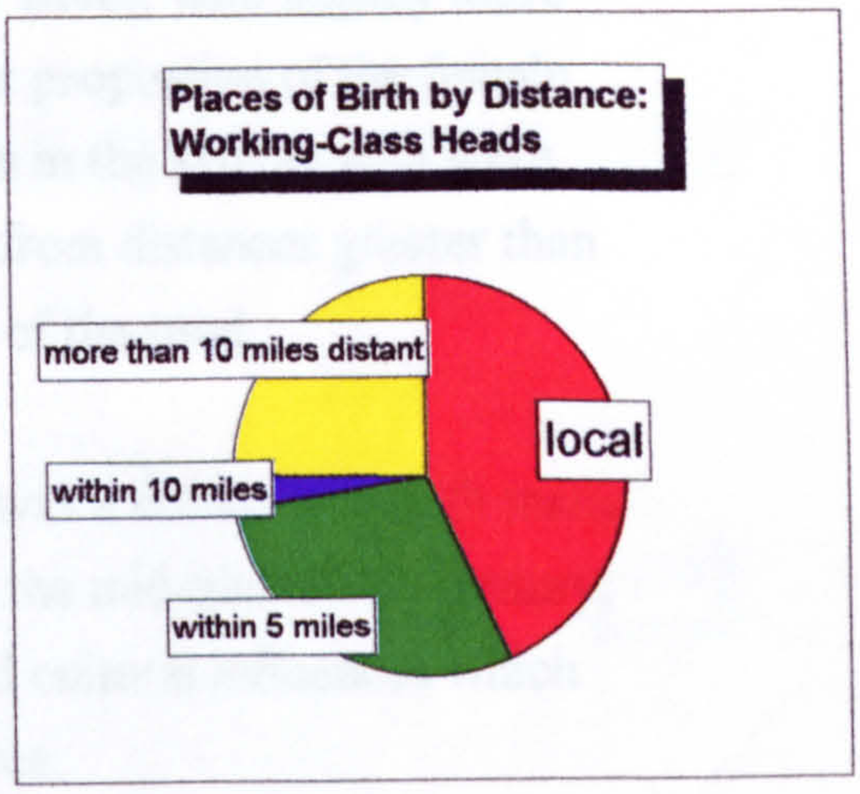


Chart 2.21b

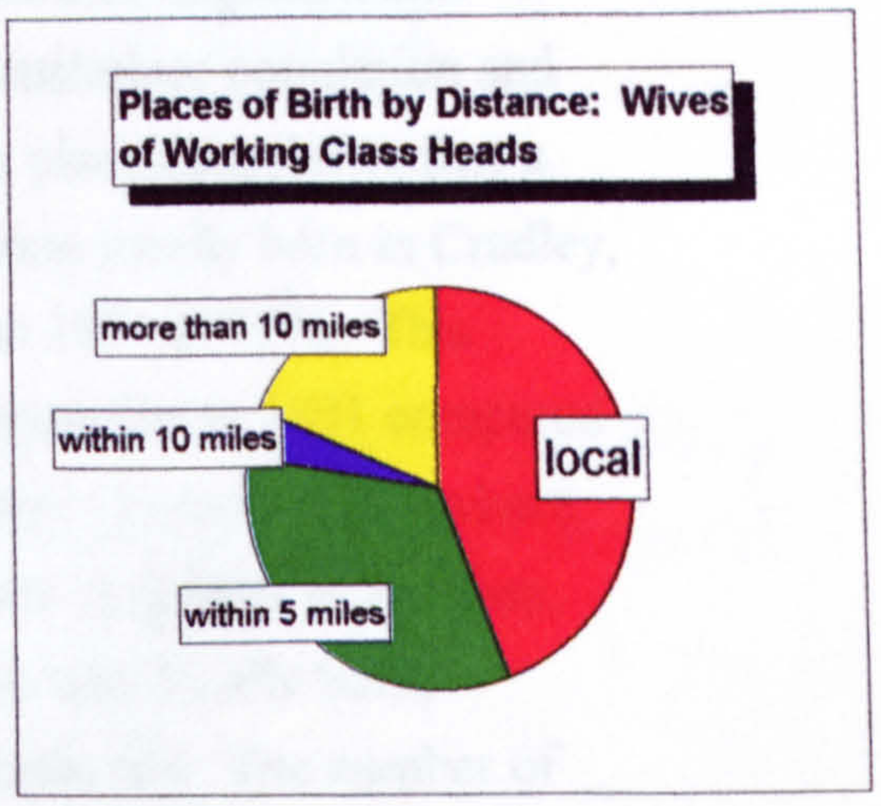
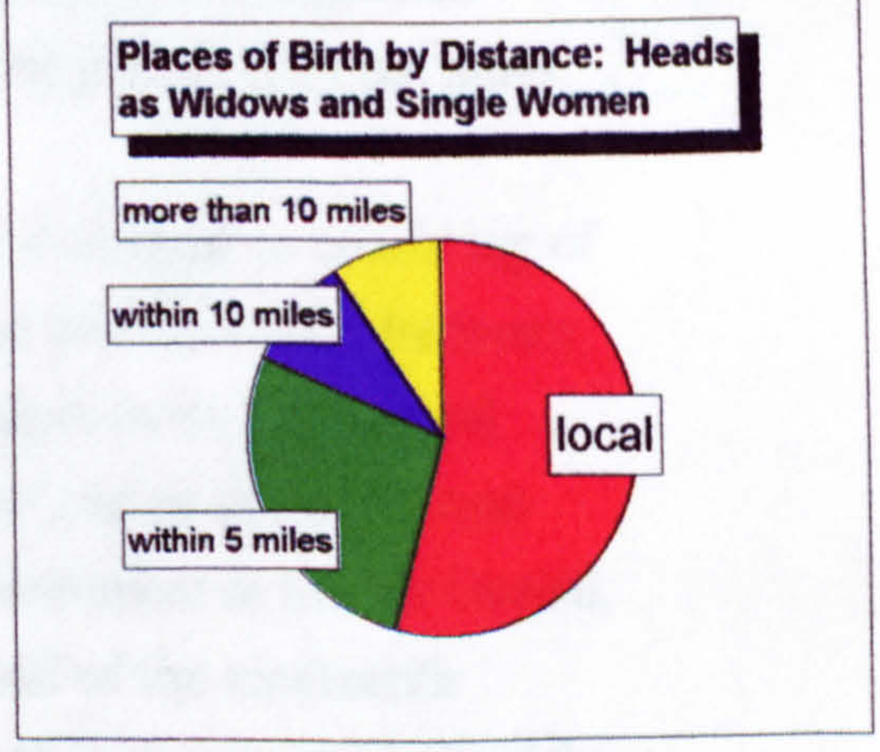


Chart 2.21c



This notion is supported by the data collected about other working class households in Cradley in 1851, and this is presented in Table 2.21 below. While a greater proportion, 43.6%, of the working class heads were local men, there was still substantial in-migration of working class men in general, with 29% coming from within a radius of not more than five miles, but with 24.4% of them coming from distances greater than ten miles. A similar pattern is evident for their wives, with slightly more of them, 44.7%, being born in Cradley, and an even greater proportion of the female heads, 54.5%, being locally born. In fact of the 114 women in the sample who were wives of heads or heads themselves, only 20 of them came from distances greater than ten miles from Cradley, a number representing only 17.5% of the total.

It is, therefore, fairly obvious that, whereas Lower Gornal was a community with many generations of stability in terms of in-migration, Cradley in the mid-nineteenth century, on the other hand, was still open to those diverse social and cultural influences which could be imported into a community by a migrant work force.

By 1891 there had been some important changes in the pattern of migration and settlement, and this data is presented in Table 2.22 for the coalminer population and 2.23 for the rest of the working class population. The birth place data shows that a greater proportion of the coalminer heads, 44%, in 1891 were locally born in Cradley, and this was almost three times as great as the proportion in 1851 at 15%. This indicates a greater degree of generational stability in the population in 1891 compared to 1851, but these figures are still well below those for Lower Gornal in 1891 where, for example, 88.3% of the coalminer heads were locally born. A greater proportion, 53.5%, of the wives of the coalminers of Cradley 1891 were also locally born, reflecting the pattern of migration and settlement of their husbands. The number of coalminer heads who migrated from distances greater than ten miles, 13.1%, was also proportionally lower in 1891 than 1851 and this is also reflected in the migration pattern of their wives with only 12.6% coming from distances greater than ten miles.

The proportion of the coalminer population which could be described as consisting of local migrants from distances of less than ten miles remained fairly constant between 1851 and 1891 with figures of 40% and 42.1% for heads respectively. This local mobility of a section of the population, perhaps seeking new jobs or escaping local unemployment in the Black Country, was a feature of the settlement in Lower Gornal, but on a much smaller scale than in Cradley in the second half of the nineteenth century. The growth of iron making in nearby Cradley Heath in the second half of the nineteenth century, and the corresponding opening of new pits to meet the demand for

Table 2.22 Places of Birth of Coalminer Heads of Household and their Wives: Cradley 1891

	Heads		Wives		Totals	
Place of Birth	N	%	N	%	N	%
Cradley	33	*44.0*	38	*53.5*	71	*48.6*
Amblecote (1)	0	*0.0*	0	*0.0*	0	*0.0*
Brierley Hill (1)	1	*1.3*	0	*0.0*	1	*0.7*
Chapel Hill (1)	1	*1.3*	1	*1.4*	2	*1.4*
Dudley (1)	1	*1.3*	3	*4.2*	4	*2.7*
Gornal (1)	1	*1.3*	1	*1.4*	2	*1.4*
Halesowen (1)	1	*1.3*	0	*0.0*	1	*0.7*
Homer Hill (1)	1	*1.3*	0	*0.0*	1	*0.7*
Kingswinford (1)	1	*1.3*	5	*7.0*	6	*4.1*
Lye (1)	10	*13.3*	1	*1.4*	11	*7.5*
Old Hill (1)	0	*0.0*	0	*0.0*	0	*0.0*
Oldbury (1)	1	*1.3*	0	*0.0*	1	*0.7*
Oldswinford (1)	1	*1.3*	0	*0.0*	1	*0.7*
Pensnett (1)	1	*1.3*	1	*1.4*	2	*1.4*
Quarry Bank (1)	2	*2.7*	1	*1.4*	3	*2.1*
Rowley Regis (1)	3	*4.0*	0	*0.0*	3	*2.1*
Stamber Mill (1)	0	*0.0*	1	*1.4*	1	*0.7*
Stourbridge (1)	1	*1.3*	0	*0.0*	1	*0.7*
Tipton (1)	1	*1.3*	0	*0.0*	1	*0.7*
Tividale (1)	0	*0.0*	0	*0.0*	0	*0.0*
West Bromwich (1)	1	*1.3*	0	*0.0*	1	*0.7*
Wollaston (1)	1	*1.3*	0	*0.0*	1	*0.7*
Wollescote (1)	1	*1.3*	5	*7.0*	6	*4.1*
Belbroughton (2)	0	*0.0*	1	*1.4*	1	*0.7*
Bewdley (2)	1	*1.3*	0	*0.0*	1	*0.7*
Birmingham (2)	1	*1.3*	3	*4.2*	4	*2.7*
Bloomfield (2)	0	*0.0*	0	*0.0*	0	*0.0*
Chaddesley Corbett (2	0	*0.0*	1	*1.4*	1	*0.7*
Mold (3)	1	*1.3*	0	*0.0*	1	*0.7*
Wolverhampton (3)	1	*1.3*	1	*1.4*	2	*1.4*
Cheshire (3)	0	*0.0*	1	*1.4*	1	*0.7*
Gloucestershire (3)	1	*1.3*	1	*1.4*	2	*1.4*
Herefordshire (3)	1	*1.3*	1	*1.4*	2	*1.4*
Monmouthshire (3)	0	*0.0*	1	*1.4*	1	*0.7*
Montgomeryshire (3)	0	*0.0*	0	*0.0*	0	*0.0*
Somerset (3)	1	*1.3*	0	*0.0*	1	*0.7*
Staffordshire (3)	1	*1.3*	0	*0.0*	1	*0.7*
Warwickshire (3)	1	*1.3*	1	*1.4*	2	*1.4*
Worcestershire (3)	1	*1.3*	0	*0.0*	1	*0.7*
Not Recorded	2	*2.7*	3	*4.2*	5	*3.4*
Totals	**75**	***100.0***	**71**	***100.0***	**146**	***100.0***

Chart 2.22a

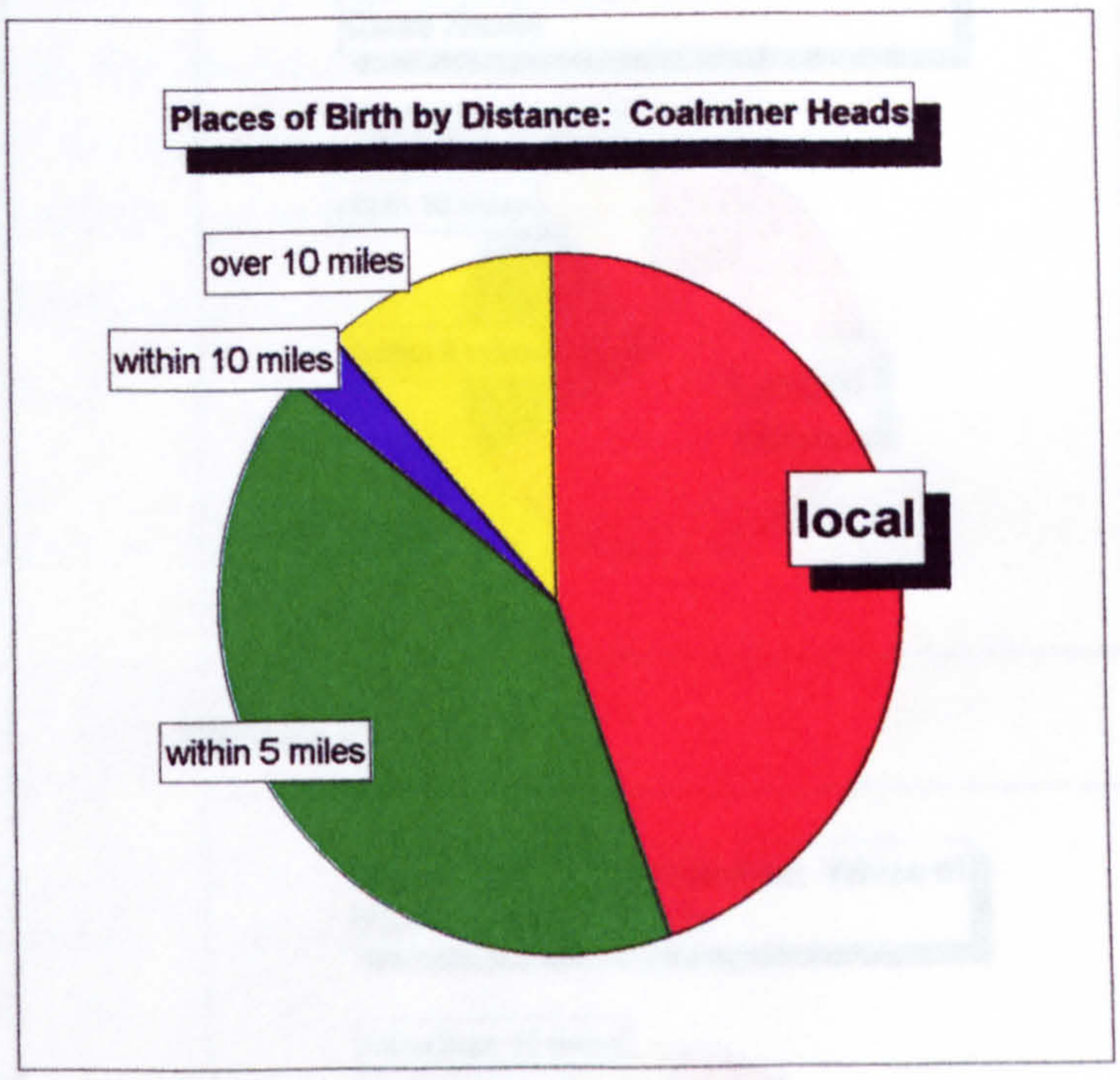
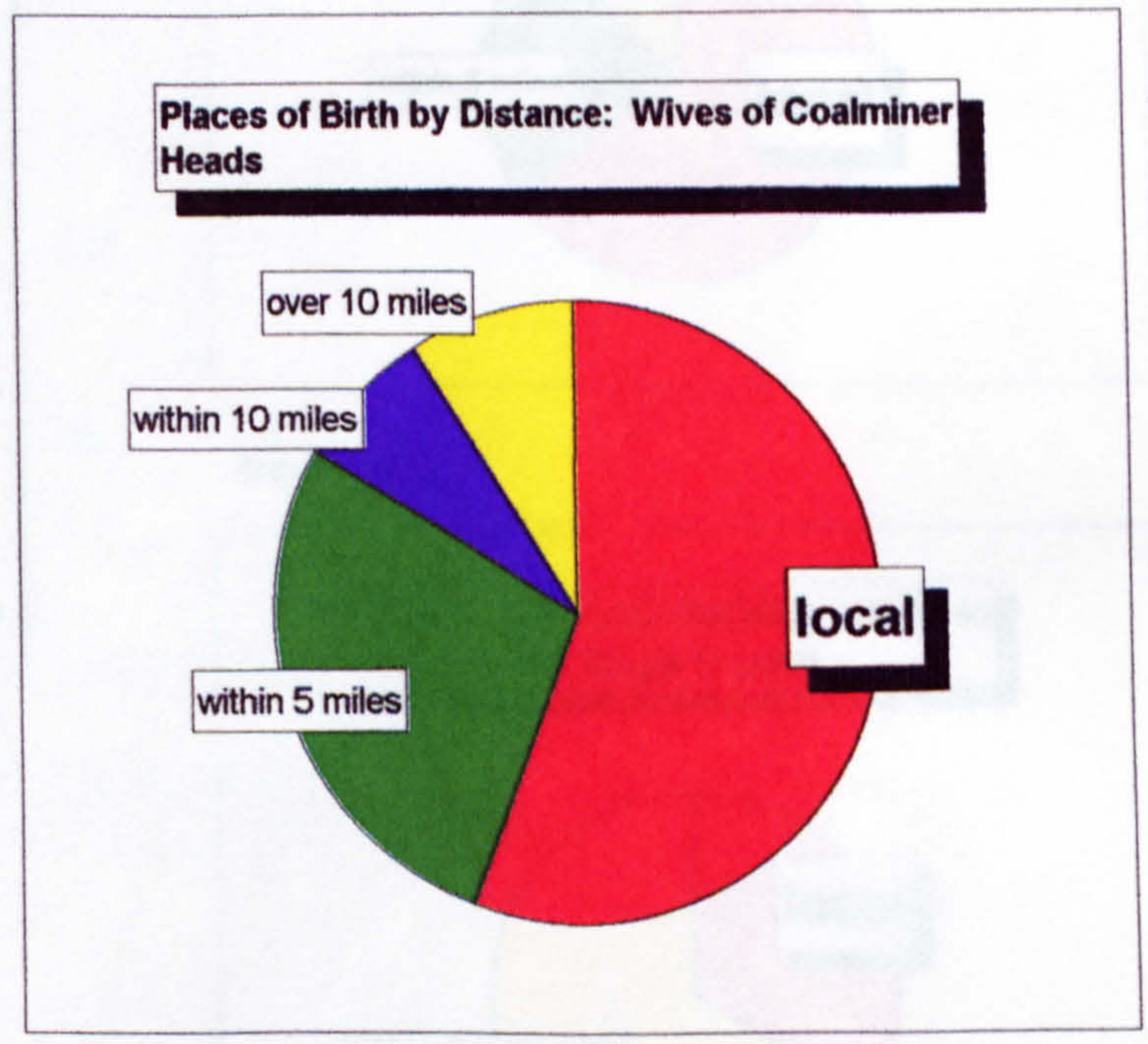


Chart 2.22b



Notes: (1) Places within 5 miles
(2) Places within 10 miles
(3) Places over 10 miles distant

Source: Census Enumerators' Books 1891; Registrar's District Stourbridge; Sub-District Halesowen; PRO Microfiche 375 1B

Table 2.23 Places of Birth of Sample of Working-Class Heads of Household other than Coalminer: Cradley 1891

Place of Birth	Heads		Wives		Heads as Widows and single women	
	N	% of heads	N	% of wives	N	% of heads
Cradley	71	67.0	64	65.3	1	33.3
Amblecote (1)	1	0.9	2	2.0	0	0.0
Brierley Hill (1)	2	1.9	2	2.0	0	0.0
Darby End (1)	0	0.0	2	2.0	0	0.0
Dudley (1)	3	2.8	2	2.0	0	0.0
Halesowen (1)	1	0.9	0	0.0	0	0.0
Kingswinford (1)	2	1.9	1	1.0	0	0.0
Lye (1)	3	2.8	3	3.1	0	0.0
Netherton (1)	1	0.9	0	0.0	0	0.0
Old Hill (1)	2	1.9	3	3.1	0	0.0
Quarry Bank (1)	1	0.9	3	3.1	0	0.0
Rowley Regis (1	1	0.9	3	3.1	0	0.0
Stourbridge (1)	2	1.9	0	0.0	0	0.0
Birmingham (2)	3	2.8	0	0.0	0	0.0
Wednesbury (2)	1	0.9	1	1.0	0	0.0
Wombourn (2)	1	0.9	0	0.0	0	0.0
Cheshire (3)	0	0.0	1	1.0	0	0.0
Devon (3)	1	0.9	0	0.0	0	0.0
Gloucestershire (3	1	0.9	0	0.0	0	0.0
Hereford (3)	0	0.0	1	1.0	0	0.0
Shropshire (3)	2	1.9	1	1.0	0	0.0
Staffordshire (3)	0	0.0	6	6.1	0	0.0
Worcestershire (3	7	6.6	3	3.1	2	66.7
Totals	106	100.0	98	100.0	3	100.0

Notes: (1) Places within 5 miles

(2) Places within 10 miles

(3) Places more than 10 miles distant

Source: Census Enumerators' Books 1891; Registrar's District Stourbridge; Sub-District Halesowen; PRO Microfiche 375 1B

Chart 2.23a

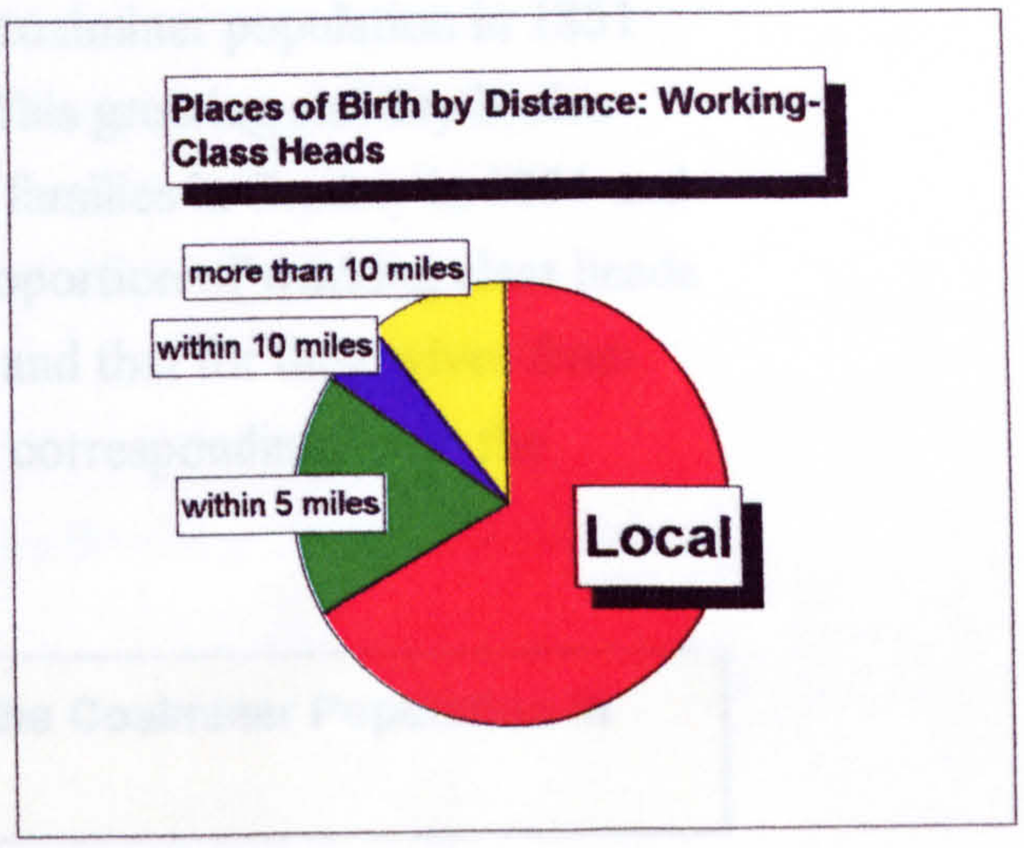


Chart 2.23b

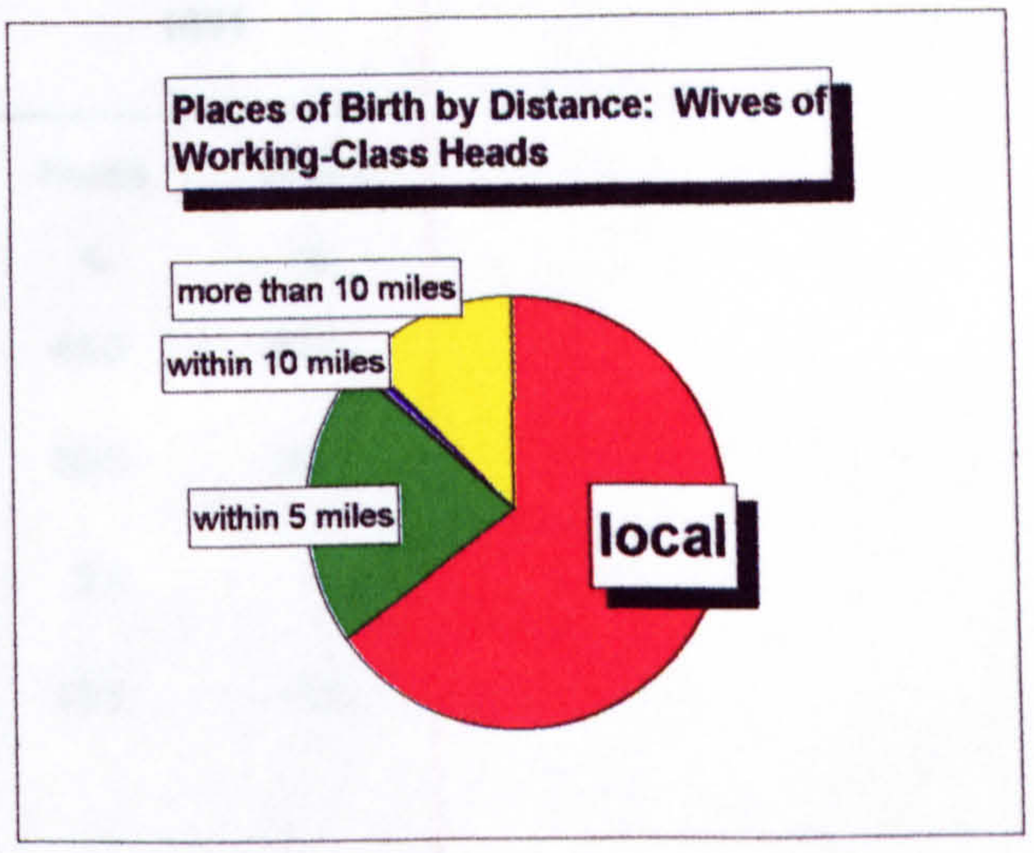
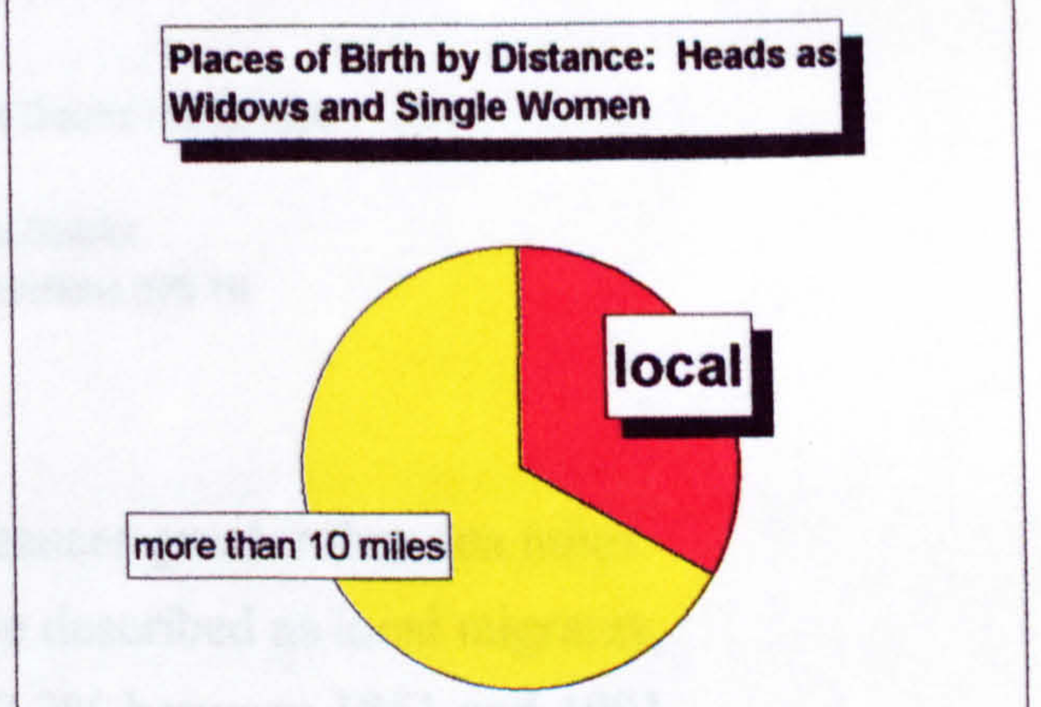


Chart 2.23c



coal, provided new employment opportunities and this was reflected in the settlement pattern, with a substantial proportion of the coalminer households consisting of local migrant families throughout the period.

This comparison between the migration patterns of the coalminer population in 1851 and 1891 in Cradley can be seen in Table 2.24 below. This growing stability is also supported by the data collected for other working class families in Cradley in 1851 and 1891 and this is presented in Table 2.24 below. The proportion of working class heads who were locally born increased from 43.6% to 67.0% and that for their wives from 44.7% to 65.3% between 1851 and 1891. There was a corresponding fall in the

Table 2.24 A Comparison of Migration Patterns in the Coalminer Population in Cradley 1851 and 1891

	1851		1891	
	Heads	Wives	Heads	Wives
	%	%	%	%
Locally born	15.0	35.0	44.0	53.5
Less than 5 miles distant	40.0	40.0	39.5	26.6
Between 5 and 10 miles distant	0.0	0.0	2.6	7.0
More than 10 miles distant	45.0	25.0	13.1	12.6
Totals	*100.0*	*100.0*	*99.2*	*99.7*

Sources: Census Enumerators' Books 1851; Registrar's District Halesowen; PRO Microfilm No. HO 1072034
Census Enumerators' Books 1891; Registrar's District Stourbridge; Sub-district Halesowen; PRO Microfiche 375 1B

proportion of heads, 24.4% to 10.3%, coming from distances greater than ten miles. The proportion of the working class heads who could be described as local migrants, from distances less than ten miles, fell from 31.7% to 22.3% between 1851 and 1891, and this again reinforces the notion that Cradley was slowly becoming a more settled community in terms of migrational stability by the end of the nineteenth century.

This comparison of the migration patterns between the working class population in 1851 and 1891 in Cradley can be seen in Table 2.25 below. Thus, a more settled working class community in terms of migrational stability was emerging in Cradley in 1891 but it still had a long way to go to be any where near that of Lower Gornal, which had been a settled community with many generations of stability by 1891. Thus in the second half of the nineteenth century the coalminer population in Cradley remained open to those outside influences which might result from an in-migrating work force of both other coalminers and workers in other occupations.

Table 2.25 A Comparison of Migration Patterns in the Working Class Population in Cradley 1851 and 1891

	1851		1891	
	Heads	Wives	Heads	Wives
	%	%	%	%
Locally born	43.6	44.7	67.0	65.3
Less than 5 miles distant	29.0	33.1	17.7	21.4
Between 5 and 10 miles distant	2.7	4.0	4.6	1.0
More than 10 miles distant	24.4	18.5	10.3	12.2
Totals	*99.7*	*100.3*	*99.6*	*99.9*

Sources: Census Enumerators' Books 1851; Registrar's District Halesowen; PRO Microfilm No. HO 1072034
Census Enumerators' Books 1891; Registrar's District Stourbridge; Sub-district Halesowen; PRO Microfiche 375 1B

Cultural Isolation

There is no reason to believe that Cradley was culturally isolated in the 19th century. If geographical isolation had led to cultural isolation in Lower Gornal, then it would not be unrealistic to imagine that the opposite was the case in Cradley. The pattern of migration discussed above shows a constantly changing population throughout the second half of the 19th century and therefore open to those cultural influences which might be imported by a migrant workforce. The topographical location of Cradley,

midway between two busy and substantial towns with good lines of communication, further opened it to outside influences, it might be suggested, although there is no hard evidence.

The growth of the settlement in the 19th century was accompanied by the growth in numbers of both churches and pubs, the latter somewhat faster than the former. Melville's Directory of Dudley and District for 1852 shows nine victuallers and beer retailers with addresses in Cradley, and a further ten in the rapidly expanding Cradley Heath. (174) Anecdotal evidence suggests that this number had increased to twenty-one by the end of the century. (175)

The nonconformist churches had perhaps made the biggest contribution in bringing religious worship and education to the area, with a chapel in 1707 and a small day school in 1747. In 1796 a Unitarian Chapel was built at Netherend and by the end of the 18th century it had become a place of some importance and was supported by a number of wealthy local families. The Baptists and Methodists were also active in Cradley and in 1790 a chapel belonging to the Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion was opened on Homer Hill, and this later became the parish church of St.Peter's. The Methodists established their first chapel in 1779 and by the third quarter of the 19th century all strands of Methodism were represented in Cradley: the Wesleyans from 1826, the Primitives from 1853, and the New Connexion from 1856. (176) Schools associated with these churches soon followed, along with two Ragged schools supported by wealthy chainmakers. (177) There were also Sunday schools associated with most churches and anecdotal evidence affirms that attendance at these was literally compulsory. (178) Most chapels also provided primitive 19th century social security in the form of the burial club, thus sparing its members the indignity of the paupers' funeral. (179) Thus all the traditional pillars of culture, chapel, school and pub were in evidence in Cradley in the second half of the 19th century, and by the end of the century these were being supplemented by the working class cultural pursuits of pigeon fancying and racing, and of course, by competitive football. (180)

Social Structure

Of the 634 separate occupiers issued with Census papers in 1851, only 87 can be designated as being other than working-class. These households represent only 13.7% of the total and they are shown in Table 2.26 below. This figure shows a larger non-

working class presence in Cradley than in Lower Gornal where only 8.4% of the total households could thus be designated in 1851. As in Lower Gornal the majority of these households are represented by retailers, dealers and merchants although they do not make up as big a proportion of the total non-working class households. The proportions of publicans and farmers were greater in Cradley; the former reflecting the traditional need for alcohol by men in heavy industry, and the latter the presence of several farms in the area that that was later to become the urban sprawl of Cradley Heath. Professional men also made up a very small part of this middle class in Cradley: perhaps nineteen of the 634 heads of households could be identified as belonging to this group, a mere 3.0% of the total heads. This was a bigger proportion than in Lower Gornal in 1851, but the same consequences, in terms of an absence in the community of that protection and responsibility regarded as the natural role of the middle class, must have prevailed in Cradley as they would have in Lower Gornal at this time.

By 1891 there had been some changes to the non-working class population, and this can be seen in Tables 2.27 below. Of the total households in Cradley in 1891 only 10.6% can be classed as non-working class, a fall of 3.1% from 1851, and the reverse of the trend observed in Lower Gornal where the proportion of these households rose slightly between 1851 and 1891. As in 1851, the largest proportion of these households, 3.0% of the total, is represented by retailers, although this figure is not as high as that in Lower Gornal in 1891, with 4.9%. The proportion of publican households remained high in Cradley in 1891, at 2.3% of the total compared with 1.3% in Lower Gornal. Within the non-working class group itself, there had been a few significant changes: the proportion of farmers had fallen while that of clerical workers had risen, again reflecting economic and industrial change in the area; while the number of professional middle class heads of households continued to remain small at thirty, or 2.7% of the total. This categorisation again leaves out farmers, clerical workers and engineers for the same reasons as discussed earlier. Even though the proportion of professional middle class households was greater in Cradley than Lower Gornal both in 1851 and 1891, it is difficult to see how these can have exercised much influence on what was a predominantly working class community of heavy manual workers. With only one in ten households being middle class in 1891, Cradley had become a solidly working class community, and this is not surprising given the continued expansion of the iron industry in the area in the second half of the 19th century.

Table 2.26 Occupation or Status of Non-Working-Class Heads of Household: Cradley 1851 (a)

Occupation or Status	Number	% of total non-working class house-holds	% of total households
Retailer, Dealer, Merchan	21	*24.1*	*3.3*
Publican (b)	16	*18.4*	*2.5*
Farmer	14	*16.1*	*2.2*
Clerical (c)	6	*6.9*	*0.9*
Engineer	5	*5.7*	*0.8*
Manufacturer	5	*5.7*	*0.8*
Iron Master	4	*4.6*	*0.6*
Clergy	3	*3.4*	*0.5*
Teacher	3	*3.4*	*0.5*
Bricklayer Employer (d)	1	*1.1*	*0.2*
Contractor	1	*1.1*	*0.2*
Manager	1	*1.1*	*0.2*
Owner of Houses	1	*1.1*	*0.2*
Painter Employer (d)	1	*1.1*	*0.2*
Police	1	*1.1*	*0.2*
Shoemaker Employer (d)	1	*1.1*	*0.2*
Solicitor	1	*1.1*	*0.2*
Tailor Employer (d)	1	*1.1*	*0.2*
Whitesmith Employer (d)	1	*1.1*	*0.2*
Totals	**87**	***100.0***	***13.7***

Notes: (a) The problems involved in deciding which categories of occupation can be designated as non-working-class in 1851 are discussed in the text

(b) This includes licensed victuallers and beer sellers

(c) This includes insurance, tax and post office workers

(d) These were classified as non-working-class because they were employers of labour

Source: Census Enumerators' Books; Registrar's District Halesowen; PRO Microfilm No. HO 1072034

Table 2.27 Occupation or Status of Non-Working-Class Heads of Households: Cradley 1891 (a)

Occupation or Status	Number	% of total non-working class house-holds	% of total households
Retailer, Dealer, Merchant	33	*28.2*	*3.0*
Publican (b)	26	*22.2*	*2.3*
Clerical (c)	14	*12.0*	*1.3*
Manager	10	*8.5*	*0.9*
Farmer	8	*6.8*	*0.7*
Manufacturer	7	*6.0*	*0.6*
Engineer	4	*3.4*	*0.4*
Teacher	3	*2.6*	*0.3*
Clergy	3	*2.6*	*0.3*
Police	2	*1.7*	*0.2*
Pawnbroker	2	*1.7*	*0.2*
Iron Master	2	*1.7*	*0.2*
Accountant	1	*0.9*	*0.1*
Doctor	1	*0.9*	*0.1*
Solicitor	1	*0.9*	*0.1*
Totals	**117**	***100.0***	***10.6***

(a) The problems involved in deciding which categories of occupation can be designated as non-working-class are discussed in the text

(b) This includes licensed victuallers and beer sellers

(c) This includes insurance, tax and post office workers

Census Enumerators' Books; Registrar's District Stourbridge; Sub-District Halesowen; PRO Microfiche 375 1B

Occupational Structure

Were coalminer households an important occupational group in Cradley in the second half of the nineteenth century? Table 2.28 below shows how important coalmining was as an occupation in Cradley in 1851 and 1891. In Cradley in 1851 there were 37 men working in coalmining, representing only 2.2% of the male population. There were only 20 coalminer heads of households: again only a very small proportion, 3.2%, of the total. By 1891 the proportion of coalminer heads had increased to 6.8% of the total, while the total number of coalminers in Cradley had still only reached 3.7% of the total male population. Between 1851 and 1891, however, the number of coalminer households had increased much more than households generally: an increase

Table 2.28 Coalminers as a Proportion of the Population in Cradley 1851 and 1891

	Coalminers	% of male pop.	Coalminer Heads of H/holds	% of Heads of H/holds	Ratio of Coalminers to H/holds	Ratio of Coalminers to Coalminer Households
1851	37	2.2%	20	3.2%	0.06	1.85
1891	107	3.7%	75	6.8%	0.10	1.42

Sources: Census Enumerators' Books 1851: Registrar's District Halesowen; PRO Microfilm No HO 1072034
Census Enumerators' Books 1891; Registrar's District Halesowen; PRO Microfiche 375 1B

of 275% compared to 75%. Perhaps too much should not be read into this since the number of coalminer households in 1851 is a very low base from which to measure. On the other hand, the increase may reflect the growing opportunity for mining employment in Cradley in the second half of the nineteenth century with the expansion of the iron industry in the neighbouring area of Cradley Heath: as employment became relatively secure, miners took the opportunity to settle and form households near to their places of work.

However, despite this tentative hypothesis, by any of the definitions discussed earlier Cradley could not possibly be called a coalminer settlement in the second half of the

nineteenth century, and comparison with Lower Gornal in 1891, where 38.0% of the heads and 27.7% of the male population were coalminers, quickly reinforces this.

What then was the nature of the occupational structure of Cradley in the second half of the nineteenth century, a structure within which the miners lived and worked? Tables 2.29 and 2.30 show the wider occupational structure in this period. They reveal a community dominated by both the smelting and the working of iron, with 60.8% in 1851 and 59.2% in 1891 of the sample of heads of households being occupied in this way, and these figures do not include those heads in other occupations who may in fact also have been occupied in the iron industry, like the blacksmiths and some of the labourers. In 1851 these ironworkers were dominated by the nailmakers, representing 24.8% of the sample; but by 1891 nailmakers only represented 3.4% of the sample, revealing the dramatic decline in hand-nailmaking which was such a dominant feature of the economic structure of the area in the second half of the nineteenth century. The antiquarian, F.W.Hackwood, maintained that one of the reasons for the decline of nailmaking in Gornal was the competition from nailmakers in the Halesowen area, but the picture revealed in Tables 2.29 and 2.30 shows that this was not really the case, but rather that there had been a general decline in nailmaking as a viable occupation by 1891. In contrast, by 1891 the dominant metal working occupation was chainmaking, representing 29.9% of the sample of heads. The heavy metal working industries, like anchor-making were also present by 1891.

Besides the metal workers, the sample of heads shows a fairly diverse working class occupational structure. By 1891, the agricultural labourer had all but disappeared apart from the hay cutter, again reflecting the dwindling number of farms in the area as agricultural land was swallowed to make room for the expanding iron industry based on Cradley Heath. Interestingly enough, there was a sharp decline in the number of female heads of household in the samples, from 9.6% in 1851 to 2.6% in 1891. This reflects the decline in the amount of nailmaking in the area which previously had allowed many widows to maintain their households, and their independence, until they were quite old. With the virtual disappearance of hand nailmaking, elderly unsupported women must have found it very difficult to keep up their households and most, it might be suggested, would have sought accommodation with their surviving children. Again, there is no hard evidence to support this hypothesis.

An examination of the number of women employed in nailmaking shows just how dramatic was the decline of this industry in the second half of the nineteenth century. The data is presented in Table 2.31 below. As an occupation for girls and unmarried

Table 2.29 **Occupations of Sample of Working-Class Heads of Household: Cradley 1851**

(a)

Occupation	Males	Females	% of sample households (b)	% of sample households excluding coalminers (c)
Nailmaker	24	7	*24.8*	*25.6*
Chainmaker	25		*20.0*	*20.7*
Puddler	7		*5.6*	*5.8*
Anvil Maker	2		*1.6*	*1.7*
Forgeman	4		*3.2*	*3.3*
Trace Maker	2		*1.6*	*1.7*
File Cutter	1		*0.8*	*0.8*
Mill Man	1		*0.8*	*0.8*
Iron Worker	3		*2.4*	*2.5*
Labourer	10		*8.0*	*8.3*
Agricultural Lab.	6		*4.8*	*5.0*
Coalminers (b)	4		*3.2*	
Haulier, Carter	4		*3.2*	*3.3*
Gardener	3		*2.4*	*2.5*
Bricklayers	2		*1.6*	*1.7*
Carpenter	2		*1.6*	*1.7*
Brickmaker	2		*1.6*	*1.7*
Shoemaker	2		*1.6*	*1.7*
Ironstone miner	1		*0.8*	*0.8*
Blacksmith	1		*0.8*	*0.8*
Cordwainer	1		*0.8*	*0.8*
Watchman	1		*0.8*	*0.8*
Porter	1		*0.8*	*0.8*
Warehouseman	1		*0.8*	*0.8*
Engine fitter	1		*0.8*	*0.8*
Cooper	1		*0.8*	*0.8*
Postman	1		*0.8*	*0.8*
Hairdresser	1		*0.8*	*0.8*
Washerwoman		2	*1.6*	*1.7*
Huxter		1	*0.8*	*0.8*
Cook		1	*0.8*	*0.8*
Totals	**114**	**11**	***100.0***	***100.0***

Notes: (a) A sample of approximately 1 in 4.5 working-class households was taken

(b) A notional 1 in 4.5 of the coalminer households were added to the sample of working-class households to give a total working-class sample ie 20/4.5 + 121 = 125

(c) These figures are calculated excluding the notional sample of 4 coalminer households

Source: Census Enumerators' Books 1851; Registrar's District Halesowen; PRO Microfilm No. HO 1072034

Table 2.30 **Occupations of Sample of Working-Class Heads of Household: Cradley 1891**

(a)

Occupation	Males	Females	% of sample households (b)	% of sample households excluding coalminers (c)
Chainmaker	35		*29.9*	*32.1*
Iron Worker	14		*12.0*	*12.8*
Anchorsmith	8		*6.8*	*7.3*
Nailmaker	3	1	*3.4*	*3.7*
Puddler	2		*1.7*	*1.8*
Forgeman	1		*0.9*	*0.9*
Blastfurnaceman	1		*0.9*	*0.9*
Roller	1		*0.9*	*0.9*
Bundler	1		*0.9*	*0.9*
Labourer	13		*11.1*	*11.9*
Coalminers	8		*6.8*	
Carpenter	4		*3.4*	*3.7*
Bricklayers	3		*2.6*	*2.8*
Blacksmith	3		*2.6*	*2.8*
Engine driver	3		*2.6*	*2.8*
Haulier, Carter	2		*1.7*	*1.8*
Brickmakers	1		*0.9*	*0.9*
Charwoman		1	*0.9*	*0.9*
Clay miner	1		*0.9*	*0.9*
Gardener	1		*0.9*	*0.9*
Gun barrel grinder	1		*0.9*	*0.9*
Hay cutter	1		*0.9*	*0.9*
Lock maker	1		*0.9*	*0.9*
Pottery worker	1		*0.9*	*0.9*
Saddlery maker	1		*0.9*	*0.9*
Scavenger	1		*0.9*	*0.9*
Slaughterer	1		*0.9*	*0.9*
Tin-plate worker	1		*0.9*	*0.9*
Washerwoman		1	*0.9*	*0.9*
Watchman	1		*0.9*	*0.9*
Totals	**114**	**3**	***100.0***	***100.0***

Notes: (a) A sample of approximately 1 in 9 working-class households was taken

(b) A notional 1 in 9 of the coalminer householdswer added to the sample of working-class households to give a total working class sample
ie 75/9+109 = 117

(c) These figures are calculated excluding the notional sample of 8 coalminer households

Source: Census Enumerators' Books 1891; Registrar's District Stourbridge; Sub-District Halesowen; PRO Microfiche 375 1B

women over ten years of age, nailmaking had ceased to exist by 1891, and only two married women and one widow were recorded as nailmakers in the working class sample. Chainmaking was also a domestic occupation and one in which women in the Black Country were increasingly occupied in the second half of the nineteenth century, and this is clearly shown in the data in Table 2.24 above. In Cradley in 1851, 9.1% of the married women, but only 3.7% of the unmarried women over ten in the working-class sample, were chainmakers. By 1891, these figures had risen to 13.6% and 30.7% respectively, a substantial increase in the latter figure, showing that chainmaking had become an important branch of female blacksmithing by the end of the nineteenth century. There does seem to be a marked difference between the two female blacksmithing occupations in so far as they could support unmarried or widowed women. From the evidence of the limited sample of heads for Cradley in 1851 and

Table 2.31 Women Employed in Nailmaking and Chainmaking in Cradley 1851 and 1891

	1851			1891		
	Married %	Single %	Widow %	Married %	Single %	Widow %
Nailmaking	21.8	43.9	33.3	1.9	0.0	20.0
Chainmaking	9.1	3.7	0.0	13.6	30.7	0.0

Sources: Census Enumerators' Books 1851: Registrar's District Halesowen; PRO Microfilm No HO 1072034
Census Enumerators' Books 1891; Registrar's District Halesowen; PRO Microfiche 375 1B

1891, in which there are no female heads, chainmaking does not seem to have allowed them to continue working to the extent that they could maintain their households into old age supported by the limited income to be had from such a domestic industry. Perhaps women from chainmaking families had expectations of a higher standard of living than they could provide themselves; or it may be that chainmaking was a more demanding occupation physically, and therefore, one which for women had to be relinquished with advancing age; or perhaps they could not earn a wage at chainmaking which would allow them to be independent. As late as 1910, when the

Black Country female chainmakers went on strike for higher wages, they were still only earning between four and five shillings a week. (181) Alternatively, of course, the samples may not be totally representative or may be too small to reveal such independent heads supported by chainmaking.

Thus, Cradley in the nineteenth century was clearly a working class settlement dominated by metal manufacture and working, while there was a fairly wide range of other occupations with coalmining becoming more important by the end of the century. Many of the iron workers were employed by iron masters like Noah Hingley, Noah Bloomer, Eliza Tinsley, William Strawson and Joseph Penn, all of whom had large scale operations in the area; many others were small scale domestic workers making chain in workshops at the backs of their houses. (182) Just as coalmining communities and the miners who lived and worked in them acquired a mythology in the nineteenth century, so too did iron working communities like Cradley. The chain and nail makers had a reputation for being rough, violent and heavy drinkers:

> *"a community of heavy-drinking and coarse mannered men, prematurely aged women and poorly shod and ragged children."* (183)

In metal working towns like Halesowen it was not an uncommon sight in the last half of the nineteenth century for it to be littered with drunken nailers late at night. Like the miners, the chain and nail makers rarely worked on Mondays and sometimes Tuesdays as well and then worked excessively for the rest of the week to make up their income. The reporter sent to the Black Country by the *Pall Mall Gazette* to investigate the circumstances of the women chainmakers' deputation to London in April 1891, discovered that the metal workers were most suspicious of the miners in their communities since some of them turned to nail or chain making after their stint at the coalface and thus competed with them. This unrestricted competition was forcing down the wages of the metal workers. (184) Those men engaged in making the big chains acquired a mythology of their own: enjoying comparative freedom; finishing their stints before noon and spending their afternoons drinking, whippet-racing, terrier fighting, or rat-catching; with their own code or unwritten laws and mores.

> *"They were hard men, who demanded hard recreation. Their dogs were the fiercest, their drinking the hardest, their sports the most brutal".* (185)

On the other hand, in the record of his visit to the Old Hill and Cradley Heath areas, published in *The English Illustrated Magazine* in 1889-90, the Reverend Harold Rylett maintained that the nail and chain makers, notwithstanding their poverty and poor living conditions, were law-abiding, sober, industrious, religious, and remarkably cheerful. (186) Such is the material of which working class myths are made and unmade.

Amenities

Anecdotal evidence indicates that the pattern of housing in Cradley by the end of the nineteenth century was typical of other areas of the Black Country: two-up-two down houses built in rows. (187) The two rooms downstairs were the parlour and the kitchen, which also doubled as a living room, the parlour only being used for special family occasions and to receive important visitors. Upstairs there were two bedrooms, one for parents, babies and very young children, and the other for the rest of the family. In these four rooms a family's whole life experiences were played out in more or less overcrowded conditions. The use of the 1891 Census in providing information about the amount of accommodation enjoyed by individual households has been discussed earlier. It can be used to reinforce much of the anecdotal and oral evidence about housing in Cradley at the end of the nineteenth century: evidence which maintains that there were a minimum of six persons on average living in the houses. (188) This data for both coalminer and other working class Cradley households can be seen in Table 2.32 below.

There are, of course, problems with the reliability and use of the data and these were discussed in detail earlier. The same problems are present with the Cradley data, and indeed, there was a higher incidence of non-recording of the information concerning occupied rooms in the Cradley returns than in Lower Gornal. Given the limitations on the use of the data discussed above, and no way of recovering missing information, the data does largely speak for itself. Only a small proportion of the working class, 15.6%, and an even smaller proportion of the coalminers, 10.7%, lived in households with more than four occupied rooms. The vast proportion of the working class in Cradley in 1891 lived in houses with four or fewer rooms available for occupation: 81.3% of the coalminer households, and 76.2% of the working class sample. The most common size appears to have been four rooms, which would also accord with other evidence showing the prevalence of the two-up-two down house in this part of the Black Country.

Table 2.32 **Number of Occupied Rooms in Coalminer and other Working-Class Households: Cradley 1891**

Number of Occupied Rooms	Coalminer Households		Working Class Households	
	N	% of Sample	N	% of Sample
Five or more	8	*10.7*	17	*15.6*
Four	34	*45.3*	50	*45.9*
Three	20	*26.7*	23	*21.1*
Two	7	*9.3*	9	*8.3*
One	0	*0.0*	1	*0.9*
Not recorded	6	*8.0*	9	*8.3*
Totals	75	*100.0*	109	*100.1*

Sources: Census Enumerators' Books 1891; Registrar's District Stourbridge; Sub-district Halesowen; PRO Microfiche 375 1B

These figures allow some very interesting comparisons to be made with Lower Gornal. There was in Cradley in 1891 a much larger proportion of coalminer accommodation consisting of five rooms or more, 10.7% compared with 2.1% in Lower Gornal and this is reflected in the working class sample also: 15.6% compared to 3.7% in Lower Gornal. This is also reflected in the accommodation consisting of three and four rooms: Cradley had a higher proportion of four-roomed houses, but a lower proportion of three roomed houses. In Lower Gornal, 23.5% of the coalminer accommodation consisted of two-roomed houses, whereas in Cradley this figure was only 9.3%. If the number of occupied rooms is an accurate reflection of the quality of accommodation, then this was far better in Cradley in 1891 than in Lower Gornal, and this superior accommodation was enjoyed by coalminer households just as much as working class households in general. It is important to stress that the coalminers were not living in inferior accommodation compared to the rest of the working class since there is a remarkable consistency of comparability in the figures between the kind of accommodation enjoyed by the coalminer and the rest of the working class in general.

Coalminer families simply lived in the type of accommodation generally available for the working class in the community in which they lived.

Comparison with the rest of the Black Country is difficult. George Barnsby, using the 1891 Census figures as a whole, produced data which shows that 64.5% of all houses had less than five rooms, with a range from 52% in Wolverhampton, to 86% in Quarry Bank. (189) These figures do, of course, appertain to the Census totals and are not occupation- or class-specific like those presented in this thesis. The very small one-up-one-down house did, however, appear to be uncommon in Cradley at the end of the nineteenth century since only 9.3% of the coalminer and 9.2% of the working class sample lived in less than three rooms. Barnsby's figures show 10.8% of the Black Country households in this category in 1891. (190)

Does this mean that the houses in Cradley in 1891 were overcrowded? Tables 2.33 and 2.34 below compare the number of occupied rooms with the number of people sharing them in both coalminer and other working class households shown as occupying less than five rooms by the census enumerators in 1891. The vast bulk of the coalminer population, 79.3%, lived in households with no more than four occupied rooms. This compares to 95.5% of the coalminer population in Lower Gornal in 1891. The data shows a mean density of occupation for coalminer households with less than five rooms of 5.2 persons, with a slightly higher density of 5.5 persons in the small three-room houses in 1891. Again, this compares to a mean density of 5.4 persons per house in Lower Gornal, with figures of 6.3 for four-roomed houses and 5.8 for three-roomed houses. These mean figures do, of course, hide individual coalminer households in Cradley which contained a large number of people: as high as ten persons in a three room household, but on the whole coalminer households in Cradley were less overcrowded than those in Lower Gornal in 1891.

Again, like the coalminers, the vast bulk of the working class population, 75.5%, lived in households with no more than four occupied rooms. The density of occupation also shows a similar pattern to those of the coalminers, with a mean of 5.2 persons per household, with the higher density of 5.5 persons in the four room households. However, the figures do show that a greater proportion of the coalminer population lived in three and two roomed houses than was the case among the working class population in general. Thus, whereas the coalminer households in Cradley in 1891 may not have been any more overcrowded than those of the rest of the working class, fewer of them lived in four-roomed houses, tending to live in the inferior accommodation of three and two rooms, assuming, again, that the number of rooms in

Table 2.33 Density of Occupation in Coalminer Households in Cradley 1891

Number of Occupied Rooms	Number of Households	Number of People Occupying	% of sample population	Mean per Household
4	34	180	45.2	5.3
3	20	110	27.6	5.5
2	7	26	6.5	3.7
1	0	0	0.0	0.0
Totals	**61**	**316**	**79.3**	**5.2**

Source: Census Enumerators' Books 1891; Registrar's District Stourbridge; Sub-district Halesowen; PRO Microfiche 375 1B

Table 2.34 Density of Occupation in Working Class Households in Cradley 1891

Number of Occupied Rooms	Number of Households	Number of People Occupying	% of sample population	Mean per Household
4	50	285	49.7	5.7
3	23	117	20.4	5.1
2	9	28	4.9	3.1
1	1	3	0.5	3.0
Totals	**83**	**433**	**75.5**	**5.2**

Source: Census Enumerators' Books 1891; Registrar's District Stourbridge; Sub-district Halesowen; PRO Microfiche 375 1B

a household is a realistic measure of the quality of the accommodation. Comparison between Cradley and the rest of the Black Country is again difficult. George Barnsby's attempt to measure levels of overcrowding has been discussed

earlier: Table 2.35 below attempts to compare the data obtained from the working class in Cradley in 1891 with Barnsby's figures for the Black Country as a whole, using his methodology.

The figures for Cradley are consistent with the range of figures calculated by Barnsby for other Black Country towns, with Cradley perhaps near the higher end of the range, with 35% of the coalminer and 29% of the working class households being overcrowded using his definition. More interestingly, in Cradley the coalminer households appear to be more overcrowded and grossly overcrowded than the rest of the working class with over one in three, 35%, of the coalminer population living in overcrowded houses and almost one in five, 18%, living in grossly overcrowded houses.

Thus at the end of the nineteenth century in both the mining community of Lower Gornal, and the metal working community of Cradley, the coalminer households may be said to have been overcrowded more or less. In Lower Gornal this was significantly higher than the rest of the working class and the coalminer population lived in smaller, inferior accommodation. In Cradley the difference between the coalminer and working class population was not so great, although, even here, the coalminers tended to live in the smaller, inferior accommodation to be found in the two- and three- roomed houses.

Inside these houses, whatever their size or level of comfort, the kitchen was the most important room. Here the cooking was done over the fire in the cast iron range, the condition of which was used to judge a wife's conformity to the ideology of respectability, and which occupies a place in working class mythology. (191) These houses did not have running water but relied on wells or pumps, either shared communally or enjoyed individually if there was one in the brewhouse or wash house at the back of the house. Sanitation was primitive, consisting of an earth closet which was emptied every four to six weeks by night soil men. In the poorer quality housing, these closets would have to be shared between households, with as many as ten people to each closet. (192) Inside these houses light was provided by candles or oil lamps and furniture and fittings would vary according to the financial health and luck of the family occupying the house. Carpets were unknown in Cradley working class homes and quarried floors would be covered with rugs home-made from old clothes. (193) Washing was done in the brewhouse or washhouse outside which may have been shared with the adjacent house. The clothes were boiled in a boiler heated by solid fuel, and the dirt was removed by beating them in a tub. The brewhouse also

contained the baking oven which was used to make bread. (194) Such houses were no different from working class houses elsewhere: they necessitated hard, repetitive

Table 2.35 Overcrowding in Cradley and the Black Country 1891

	As a % of total population	
	Overcrowded (a)	Grossly Over-crowded (b)
Cradley (Coalminer H/Holds)	35%	18%
Cradley (Working class H/Holds)	29%	11%
Bilston (c)	36%	18%
Dudley (c)	29%	23%
Smethwick (c)	16%	8%
Stourbridge (c)	19%	10%
Walsall (c)	23%	14%
West Bromwich (c)	31%	17%
Wolverhampton (c)	18%	9%

Notes: (a) The definition of overcrowding used by Barnsby is :
1 room . . . more than 2 persons sleeping
2 rooms . . . more than 3 persons sleeping
3 rooms . . . more than 5 persons sleeping
4 rooms . . . more than 7.5 persons sleeping

(b) The definition of gross overcrowding used by Barnsby is:
1 room . . . more than 3 persons sleeping
2 rooms . . . more than 5 persons sleeping
3 rooms . . . more than 7 persons sleeping
4 rooms . . . more than 9 persons sleeping

Sources: G.Barnsby, op.cit., pp.97-8
Census Enumerators' Books 1891; Registrar's District Stourbridge; Sub-district Halesowen; PRO Microfiche 375 1B

physical labour in order to keep them respectable: the goal of many working class mothers.

Thus Lower Gornal and Cradley were communities with marked similarities and differences in their respective socio-economic structures in the second half of the nineteenth century, and which have been outlined in this Chapter. The most important difference between them in so far as the methodology of this Thesis is concerned is that one was a community which could confidently described as dominated by coalminers, whereas the other was one in which coalminers formed just one occupational group among many others. The next three Chapters will examine the household and family structures of both the coalminers and the rest of the working class generally which had evolved by the mid-nineteenth century in these two communities.

NOTES for CHAPTER TWO

1 For the purposes of this Thesis the Black country is taken to mean an area of approximately ten square miles to the west of Birmingham, roughly quadrilateral in shape bounded by the towns of Wolverhampton and Walsall in the north, and Stourbridge and Halesowen in the south. Within this area lay the South-Staffordshire coalfield with the town of Dudley at the centre, where a ridge of high land running south-east from Sedgley to Northfield could be conveniently crossed.

2 **G.Barnsby**, *Social Conditions in the Black Country*, (1980) pp.2-3; this is a selective and slightly modified version of Barnsby's Table, with figures for Cradley in 1871 and 1881 added from **H.J.H**, 'Crade-lei -- Cradley', in *Stour Vale Life*, Vol. 6, No.5, (1976), p.5

3 **T.J.Raybould**, *The Economic Emergence of the Black Country*, (1973) p.22

4 **A.J.Taylor**, *Victoria County History*, Staffordshire, Volume 2, (1967), pp.74-7; **R.H.Kinvig, J.G.Smith** and **M.J.Wise** eds., *Birmingham and Its Regional Setting: A Scientific Survey*, (1950), pp.234-41

5 Ibid.

6 R.H.Kinvig, op.cit., p.242

7 **R.Church**, *The History of the British Coalmining Industry*, Volume 3, (1986), p.229

8 **A.J.Taylor**, 'The Sub-contract System in the British Coal Industry', in **L.S.Pressnell**, ed. *Studies in the Industrial Revolution. Essays presented to T.S.Ashton*, (1960), p.217

9 *Midland Mining Commission*, *First Report*, 1843, pp.ci-civ

10 A.J.Taylor, *Victoria County History*, Staffordshire, Volume 2, (1967), pp.98-9

11 A.J.Taylor, 'The Sub-contract System', op.cit., p.217

12 A.J.Taylor, *Victoria County History*, Staffordshire, Vol.2, (1967) p.99; A.J.Taylor, 'The Sub-contract System', pp.215-6; T.J.Raybould, op.cit., p.188

13 **J.Benson**, *British Coalminers in the Nineteenth Century: A Social History*, (1980), p.69

14 Ibid., p.72; A.J.Taylor, 'The Sub-contract System', p.220 and 230

15 J.Benson, op.cit., p.117

16 The 1850 Act for the Inspecting of Coal Mines led to the creation of a small inspectorate who had powers to enter mines, see that correct plans were kept and that fatal accidents were notified to the Home Secretary. The first Black Country inspector was Joseph Dickenson and he had charge of 740 collieries, stretching

from Lancashire to Worcestershire. This number was reduced in subsequent years and from 1855 there was a resident inspector in Wolverhampton.

17 A.J.Taylor, *Victoria County History, Staffordshire*, op.cit., p.94

18 **P.Hair**, 'Mortality from Violence in British Coal-Mines 1800-50', in *Economic History Review*, Vol.21, No.3, 1968, p.545

19 Ibid., p.546, (adapted)

20 R.Church, op.cit., p.583

21 A.J.Taylor , *Victoria County History, Staffordshire*, p.100

22 P.Hair, op.cit., p.557 (adapted)

23 R.Church, op.cit., p.583

24 G.Barnsby, op.cit., pp.30-1

25 *Report from the Select Committee on Coal 1873*, in IUP Series of Parliamentary Papers, p.235

26 J.Benson,op.cit., p.43

27 R.Church, op.cit., pp.584-5

28 G.Barnsby, op.cit., p.30

29 J.Benson, op.cit., pp.39-40

30 *Midland Mining Commission*, First Report, 1843, p.lv

31 G.Barnsby, op.cit., pp.223-4 (adapted)

32 G.Barnsby, op.cit., pp.39-40

33 T.J.Raybould, op.cit., p.214

34 *The Miners Association: South Staffordshire and East Worcestershire Miners Wages and Prices of Coal for the last 45 years.* (Undated)

35 G.Barnsby, op.cit., p.212

36 Ibid., p.224 (adapted)

37 Ibid.

38 R.Church, op.cit., pp.78-9

39 A.J.Taylor, op.cit., p.103

40 The strike of 1864 lasted for 7 months, those of 1884 and 1893 both lasted for 4 months

41 quoted in G.Barnsby, op.cit., p.221

42 J.Benson, *British Coalminers*, pp.65-7

43 Ibid., pp.76-8

44 *Midland Mining Commission*, 1843, pp.xliii-liv; *Report on Mining Districts*, 1859, p.14

45 *Midland Mining Commission*, 1843, p.lxxxvii; G,Barnsby, op.cit., p.29; J.Benson, op.cit., p.129

46 *Midland Mining Commission*, 1843, p.lxxxix

47 Ibid., pp.xcvi-xcvii

48 Ibid., p.lxxxviiii

49 Ibid., p.xc and xcix-c

50 Ibid., p.xcii

51 Ibid., pp.xc-xci and xcix

52 Ibid., pp. lxxxvi-lxxxvii

53 Ibid., p.lxxvii

54 Letters to 'The Morning Chronicle' from the Correspondents in the Manufacturing and Mining Districts, the Towns of Liverpool and Birmingham and the Rural Districts, in **J.Ginswick**, ed., *Labour and the Poor in England and Wales 1849-51*, pp.105-110

55 *The Wolverhampton Spirit of the Times*, November 21st, 1863

56 Ibid., April, 1864

57 *Report from the Select Committee on Coal 1873*, in IUP Series of Parliamentary Papers, p.27

58 *The Advertiser*, February 4th, 1882

59 *Midland Mining Commission*, op.cit., p.lxxvii

60 J.Benson, op.cit., pp.115-6

61 quoted in J.Benson, op.cit., p.117; also p.128

62 G.Barnsby, op.cit., p.84

63 J.Benson, op.cit., p.93

64 T.Raybould, op.cit., p.107

65 Ibid., pp.109-10

66 Ibid., pp.108-110

67 J.Benson, op.cit., p.119

68 Letters to 'The Morning Chronicle', op.cit., pp.95-103

69 These Reports are:
1852... *Report to the General Board of Health on a preliminary Enquiry into the Sewerage, Drainage, Water Supply and Sanitary Conditions in Dudley* by William Lee,
1871... *Report to the Privy Council on the Prevalence of Typhus at Dudley and the Sanitary Condition of the Borough* by Dr.Thorne,
1874... *Report to the Local Government Board on the Sanitary Conditions of the Municipal Borough of Dudley* by Dr.Ballard,
1887... *Special Report to the Local Government Board on Sanitary Conditions in Staffordshire and Worcestershire*

70 G.Barnsby, op.cit., pp.56-61

71 Ibid., p.57

72 Ibid., p.79

73 Ibid., p.80-1

74 Ibid., pp.84-5

75 J.Benson, op.cit., p.124

76 R.Church, op.cit., pp.611-37; **M.Bulmer**, 'Sociological Models of the Mining Community', *Sociological Review*, 23/1, (1975), pp.85-8; **B.Williamson**, *Class, Culture and Community*, (1982), pp.5-6; J.Benson, op.cit., pp.81-5

77 J.Benson, op.cit., pp.83-8

78 The settlements of Lower Gornal and Gornalwood were contiguous and separated only by the road running from Dudley to Himley to the west and they will be considered as one settlement

79 **W.White**, *Birmingham and District Directory*, 1873, p.1085

80 **E.A.Underhill**, *The Story of the Ancient Manor of Sedgley*, (1941), p.5

81 **D.Latham**, *Religion, Isolation amd Occupation: A Study of Mid-Nineteenth Century Lower Gornal and Gornal Wood*, MA Dissertation, Wolverhampton Polytechnic, (1989), p.56

82 Ibid., pp.57-8

83 **E.Higgs**, *Making Sense of the Census*, (1989), p.71

84 Ibid., p.72

85 **M.Anderson**, 'The study of family structure', **E.Wrigley**, ed., *Nineteenth Century Society*, (1972), p.75; **W.Armstrong**, 'The Census Enumerators' Books: a Commentary', **R.Lawton**, ed., *The Census and Social Structure*, (1978), p.37

86 **P.E.Razzell**, 'The evaluation of baptism as a form of birth registration through cross-matching census and parish register data: a study in methodology', *Population Studies*, 26, 1972, p.123

87 Lower Gornal only achieved parochial status in 1823 being part of the parish of Sedgley before this.

88 **P.Tillott**, 'Sources of inaccuracy in the 1851 and 1861 censuses', E.Wrigley, ed., *Nineteenth Century Society*, (1972), pp.105-6

89 **A.Campbell**, *The Lanarkshire Miners*, (1979), pp.164-8

90 R.Church, op.cit., p.614

91 Ibid., pp.614-5

92 **C.Storm-Clark**, 'The Miners: the relevance of oral evidence', in *Oral History Journal*, Vol.1, No.4, p.88-91

93 Ibid., p.85

94 A.Briggs, 'The Language of `Class' in Early Nineteenth-Century England', **R.S.Neale** ed., *History and Class*, (1983), p.8; **H.Perkin**, *The Origins of Modern English Society 1780-1880*, (1969), p.213

95 R.S.Neale, op.cit., pp.14-15; H.Perkin, op.cit., p.219

96 **W.Armstrong**, 'The use of information about occupation', **E Wrigley**., ed., *Nineteenth Century Society: Essays in the Use of Quantitative Methods for the Study of Social Data*, p.198

97 R.S.Neale, op.cit., pp.22-3

98 **E.Thompson**, *The Making of the English Working Class*, (1963), p.11 and also ch.6

99 **K.Marx and F.Engels**, *The Communist Manifesto*, (1848); **K.Marx**, *Capital*, (1867); **F.Engels**, *Condition of the working class in England*, (1844-5)

100 R.S.Neale, op.cit., pp.25-6; W.Armstrong, op.cit., p.200

101 **H.Gerth** and **C.Wright Mills**, eds., *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, (1948), Part II, ch.VII; R.Neale, op.cit., p.56-7

102 E.Higgs, op.cit., p.78; W.Armstrong, 'The use of information about occupation', op.cit. p. 192; W.Armstrong, 'The Census Enumerators' Books: a Commentary', op.cit., pp.54-7

103 M.Anderson, 'The study of family structure', E.Wrigley, op.cit., p.61

104 From 1851 onwards the house was defined as the space between the external and party walls of a building intended for occupation. Obviously the Census Enumerators had to find an 'occupier'. It will be assumed that each 'occupier' was a head of household and that the total number of occupiers represents the total households. In 1891 the problem was confused even further when many enumerators defined a house as a space occupied by a single household. Obviously there are considerable problems involved in both extended and multiple households about the definition of a 'household' and this will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 3

105 **J.Benson**, *The Penny Capitalists: A Study of Nineteenth Century Working-Class Entrepreneurs*, (1983)

106 H.Perkin, op.cit., pp.182-195

107 **T.Carlyle**, *Chartism, in English and Other Critical Miscellanies, 1839-57*, ch.vi

108 *Report on Mining Districts*, 1850, p.12, 26,30; 1852, pp.11-13; 1859, p.11

109 *Liber Parochialis - Trades and Occupations in the Parish*, 1832

110 W.White., op.cit., p.1085; *Kelly's Directory 1896*, p.304

111 R.H.Kinvig, op.cit., p.241

112 **S.A.Williams**, 'Simple Directions - Gornal Version', *The Blackcountryman*, Vol.5 No.2, p.39

113 **M.Haines**, 'Fertility, Nuptiality, and Occupation: A Study of Coal Mining Populations and Regions in England and Wales in the Mid-Nineteenth Century', *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, Vol.8, No.2, 1977, p.268

114 G.Barnsby, op.cit., pp.212-229

115 **F.M.Hackwood**, *Sedgley Researches*, (1898), p.104

116 E.A.Underhill, op.cit., p.157

117 G.Barnsby, op.cit., p.91. It seems that any increase in the supply of housing was due to the activities of private builders and landlords since the Artisans' and Labourers' Dwellings Act of 1875 had resulted in little house building activity by local authorities. See also **J.Benson,** *The Working Class in Britain 1850-1939,* (1989), pp.77-8; **R.Rodger,** *Housing in Urban Britain 1780-1914,* (1989) chapter 7; **M.Daunton,** *House and Home in the Victorian City,* (1983) p.35; **J. Burnett,** *A Social History of Housing 1815-1970,* (1978), pp.138-144

118 T.Raybould, op.cit., p.212

119 Ibid., pp.213-4

120 W.White, op.cit., pp.614-5

121 J.Benson, *British Coalminers,* p.88

123 **H.McLeod,** 'New Perspectives on Victorian Working-Class Religion: the Oral Evidence', *Oral History Journal,* Vol.14, No.1, (1986)

124 AE.Underhill, op.cit., pp.296-389; *Brabner's Gazeteer of England and Wales,* c.1896

125 *Midland Mining Commission, Appendix to First Report,* Parliamentary Papers, pp.49-50

126 Ibid., p.50

127 Report from the Commissioner on the Mining Districts, 1850, Parliamentary Papers, pp.23-4

128 Ibid., pp.25-7

129 D.Latham, op.cit., p.46

130 **Reverend W.Vance,** *Sermons: With a Voice from Mines and Furnaces,* (1853), p.xxix

131 Reported in the *Spirit of the Times,* December 5th, 1863

132 Ibid., November 21st, 1863

133 Ibid., January 9th, 1864

134 Reported in *The Advertiser,* February 4th, 1882.

135 Appendix to the *Second Report of the Commisssioners, Trades and Manufactures,* Part II, *Report and Evidence of Sub-Commissioners,* 1843, Q75 (IUP Edition)

136 Ibid., Q75

137 Ibid., Q87

138 quoted in J.Benson, *British Coalminers,* p.85

139 *1882 Ordnance Survey Sheet LXVII,* 10, Scale 1:2500

140 *The Dudley Guardian,* February 6th, 1875; **Dr.E.Ballard,** *Report on the sanitary conditions of Lower Sedgley Urban Sanitary District, 1875*

141 E.Higgs, op.cit., p.56

142 G.Barnsby, op. cit., p98

143 Ibid.; the mean was calculated from the figures for individual Black Country towns given in the table p.96

144 Ibid.; calculated from the table, p.96

145 Ibid., pp.96-8

146 *Sedgley Local Board Minutes*, May 31st, 1876

147 **Dr.Ballard**, *Report to the Local Government Board on the Sanitary Conditions of the Municipal Borough of Dudley, 1874*, (Dudley Library Typescript), pp. 17-18

148 *Sedgley Local Board Minutes*, June 19th, 1876

149 Ibid., September 12th, 1876

150 Ibid., February 13th, 1877; September 11th, 1877; November 13th, 1877; December 11th, 1877

151 Ibid., January 8th, 1978; July 13th, 1880; October 19th, 1881

152 Ibid., September 11th, 1877, the Medical Officer reported that in August 1877 15 of the 24 deaths recorded that month were of children under 5 years of age

153 Ibid., February 12th, 1878

154 **F.Barnett**, *A History of Lower Gornal*, p.29

155 **H.J.H**, 'Crade-lei -- Cradley', in *Stour Vale Life*, Vol. 6, No.5, (1976), p.2; **M.Raven**, *Black Country Towns and Villages*, (1991), p.22

156 M.Raven, op.cit., p.22; **R.Millward** and **A.Robinson**, *The West Midlands*, p.121;

157 Reprint of the first edition of the one-inch ordnance Survey of England and Wales, sheet 42

158 **J. Billingham**, *History Around Us: Halesowen*, (1991), pp.36-8

159 Ibid., p.41

160 **W. Yates**, *A Map of the County of Stafford*, (1775), reprinted by the Staffordshire Record Society, 1984.

161 **F.Cambell**, *Stewponey Countryside*, (1966), pp.5-7; **D.Palliser**, *The Staffordshire Landscape*, (1976), p.180

162 Ibid.; J.Billingham, op.cit., p.31

163 M.Raven, op.cit., p.22; D.Palliser, op.cit., p.182; R.Millward and A.Robinson, op.cit., p.122; H.J.H, op.cit., p3

164 D.Palliser, op.cit., p.185; J.Billingham, op.cit., p.32; **R.Moss**, *Mushroom Green Chainshop*, (1977), p.3

165 **G.Booth**, *The Midlands:Industrial Archaeology*, (1973), p.31

166 Ibid., p.31; R.Millward and A.Robinson, op.cit., p.120; **P.Owen**, 'Perceptions of Female Workers in the Black Country 1870-1910', in *The Journal of the Staffordshire Industrial Archaeological Society*, No. 13, (1989), pp.2-3

167 J.Billingham, op.cit., p.34

168 M.Raven, op.cit., p.22; R.Millward and A.Robinson, op.cit., p.122-3

169 G.Booth, op.cit., p.32

170 **C.Willetts**, 'Cradley at the Turn of the Century', in *The Blackcountryman*, Vol.15, Nos 1 & 2, (1982), No.1, p.25

171 H.J.H, op.cit., pp.2-3

172 J.Billingham, op.cit., pp.17-19

173 T.Raybould, op.cit., p.77

174 Melville's Directory of Dudley and District, 1852, pp.106-110

175 C.Willetts, op.cit., No.2, p18

176 H.J.H, op.cit., pp.5-6

177 Ibid., p.6

178 C.Willetts, op.cit., No.2, p.21

179 C.Willetts, op.cit., No.1, p28

180 Ibid., No.2, pp.22-3

181 P.Owen, op.cit., p.15

182 **K.Smith**, 'Cradley Heath: A Glimpse into the Past', *StourVale Life*, Vol. 5, No. 4, 1975; *Black Country Bugle*, No.4, 1972, pp.8-9; M.Raven, op.cit., p.22; H.J.H., op.cit., p.4; **P.Barnsley**, *Cradley*, (1993), p.28

183 M.Raven, op.cit., pp.33-4

184 ibid; *Black Country Bugle*, No.5, 1972, p.8

185 *Black Country Bugle*, No.4, 1972, pp.8-9

186 **R.Moss**, 'The Other Side of the Chain Industry', *Contact*, Vol.6, No.2, 1977, p.13

187 C.Willetts, op.cit., No.1, p.25

188 Ibid., p.27

189 G.Barnsby, op. cit.; the mean was calculated from the figures for individual Black Country towns given in the table p.96

190 Ibid.; calculated from the table, p.96

191 A *'two-up-two down'* house has been reconstructed at the Black Country Museum and it is furnished and decorated as a typical chainmaker's house c.1900. Many of the staff of the museum staff provide vivid oral testimony of the conditions prevailing in such houses, based either on their own experiences or those of their parents

192 C.Willetts, op.cit., No.1, p.27

193 C.Willetts, op.cit., No.1, p.26; oral evidence from staff at the Black Country Museum

194 Oral evidence from staff at the Black Country Museum

CHAPTER THREE

Age and Gender

This chapter will examine the age and gender structure of coalminer households at two points in time in the second half of the nineteenth century, and also in two places, Lower Gornal and Cradley. Comparison will be made throughout with other working-class households with which the coalminers shared time and space, and, where possible, with household data obtained from other areas and other occupation groups. (1)

The sources of evidence for this analysis are the Census Enumerators' Books for both 1851 and 1891. The enumeration of the Census remained essentially the same from 1841 to 1901 and the subject matter the same from 1851 to 1891: the names of members of households dwelling at specified addresses, and particulars for each individual relationship to the head of the household, marital status, age and sex, occupation, birthplace and any infirmity. (2) In 1891 occupation was divided into *"employers, employed and working on own account"* and additional questions were asked about housing, requiring the number of rooms occupied in houses of less than five rooms. (3)

There has been considerable debate about the reliability of the Census as a source for historians, mostly focused on two aspects: the almost inevitable under-recording; and the possibility of mistakes in reporting and recording. There is now no way of knowing the extent to which prejudice and ignorance led to either deliberate or inadvertent falsification of the returns, but, in course of time this probably grew less as the Census became a familiar institution, and as standards of education improved, so too would accuracy. (4)

The extent of errors of reporting and recording to a large measure centres on the crucial role of the enumerator and there were numerous complaints about the qualities of those who volunteered for the job, being *"no better than labourers in point of education"*, and *"on the whole rather a poor lot ... very unsatisfactory"*. (5) Michael Drake warns us that we should approach the enumerators' returns with all our critical faculties fully alerted, *"particularly for those studying small areas where the idiosyncrasies of an enumerator might lead to a quite misleading set of returns"*. (6) However, the present writer's analysis of the 1851, 1881 and 1891 Censuses for two such small areas as referred to by Drake has not revealed any obvious idiosyncrasies likely to lead to serious misinterpretation of the data, and at simple face value it is the painstaking struggle for

accuracy which stands out in the enumerators' books. This does not mean of course that there are not small idiosyncrasies, and indeed obvious mistakes of recording, which need comment and this will be made in the relevant parts of the text.

The under-recording of infants under five in particular is generally recognised, and it seems that some parents thought that newly born infants who had yet to be named or christened did not need to be included in the Census. (7) D.V.Glass has attempted to calculate the margin of under-recording amongst this age-group by comparison with birth and death registration statistics, and his calculations allow revisions to be made to numbers. (8) Unfortunately there is no evidence about how widespread these omissions were or how they varied from area to area and therefore no attempt has been made in this Thesis to adjust the numbers in any age group, since such adjustment may simply compound errors.

Errors in reporting ages accurately, whether intentional or not, also cause concern to the historian seeking to reconstruct social structure, and indeed, Edward Higgs maintains that this is *"without doubt one of the most problematic features of the census manuscripts"*. (9) This repeats the opinion of the Registrar General in 1891 who maintained in his report that *"not improbably the greater proportion of adults"* did not know their precise age, and therefore gave an approximation, often in some multiple of five or ten. (10) This rounding up or down may have reflected lack of knowledge of exact age or an unwillingness to disclose it accurately, for example by those young women who exaggerated their ages to get higher wages available to those over twenty-one and depressed them before marriage in order not to appear too old. (11) There may also have been some exaggeration of age by working-class men in their late 50's in order to improve their chances of receiving poor relief, and errors of forgetfulness by the old who simply could not remember how old they were. The extent to which this occurred, however, is unknown, and if researchers choose reasonably wide age groups in which to classify the population then it should not lead to any gross misinterpretation of the data. (12) Research on the reliability of age data is so far inconclusive. Michael Anderson's work on Preston identified a group of inhabitants who appeared in both the 1851 and 1861 Censuses and while only 53% had exactly consistent ages, only 4% were more than two years out. (13) P.M.Tillott's work on samples of population from Derbyshire and Yorkshire in 1851 and 1861 found higher consistency rates of 60.6% and 67.5% respectively, while 5% of both samples were more than two years out. (14) More recent research by the Cambridge Group for the History of Population and Social Structure on Colyton in Devon has found very similar levels of consistency in age reporting between

Censuses to Anderson, but the proportion with a discrepancy of more than two years was greater at 6.9% for males and 9.5% for females. (15) The latest research on this subject of age reporting consistency presents a fairly optimistic view of the overall accuracy of such data both in consistency from one Census to the next and in the extent of rounding up or down. (16)

A very limited sample of 72 heads of households of Lower Gornal was traced between the two Censuses of 1851 and 1861, using names, family details and location to establish, with a reasonable degree of certainty, that the same persons were identified in both Censuses. The raw data from this research is shown in Table 3.1. The female sample is so small that it would be dangerous to make any comparisons with similar data collected elsewhere, but the overall data does invite comparison. The level of absolute consistency at 43.1% is lower than that found anywhere else, and the proportion with a discrepancy of more than two years is also higher at 12.5%. However, if the proportion of those who were only inconsistent by one year is added to this figure of 43.1%, then a new figure of 73.7% emerges representing those who are absolutely or nearly absolutely consistent in their inter-censal ages. Since the Census was taken on a particular day in the year, it is not unlikely that some will have rounded ages upwards at one of the Censuses to give their age in the Census year rather than their actual age at the time of the Census. (17)

It is possible to apply some simple statistical techniques to calculate the degree of confidence which might be placed in results obtained from such a sample as the one decribed above. This is done by calculating the range either side of the sample estimate within which we expect the true value for the whole population to lie. If it is assumed that the degree of confidence required is to be 95 % certain, which will give a reasonable accuracy, then the figure of 43.1% (those absolutely consistent in reporting their ages) is reasonably accurate to +/- 11.6%, and the figure of 12.5% (those with discrepancies of no more than 2 years) is reasonably accurate to +/- 7.7% if applied to the whole population of Lower Gornal in the mid-nineteenth century. If the first two categories from Table 3.1 are aggregated, then 73.7% of the population could be regarded as reporting their ages with near consistency: ie. no more than one year discrepant. Using the same statistical technique with a confidence interval of 95%, then this figure is accurate to +/- 10.2%. (18) In other words, anything between 63.5% (73.7% -10.2%) and 83.9% (73.7% + 10.2%) of the population of Lower Gornal were reporting their ages consistently. However, strictly speaking, the sample of 221 heads of household was technically too small to achieve this 95% degree of confidence in the accuracy of the result: a sample of 255 would have been needed to give this degree of accuracy. (19)

Table 3.1 Consistency of Age-Recording in Lower Gornal 1851-61

Age in 1861	Consistent		1 Year Discrepancy		2 years Discrepancy		3 Years or more Discrepancy		Totals	
	M	*F*	*M*	*F*	*M*	*F*	*M*	*F*	*M*	*F*
0–29	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
30–34	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	0
35–39	3	0	1	0	2	0	0	0	6	0
40–44	2	0	3	0	1	0	1	0	7	0
45–49	7	0	8	0	2	0	0	0	17	0
50–54	4	1	0	0	2	0	0	0	6	1
55–59	4	1	4	0	1	0	1	0	10	1
60+	5	1	6	0	1	1	5	2	17	4
Totals m	28		22		9		7		66	
%	*42.4*		*33.3*		*13.6*		*10.6*		*100.0*	
f		3		0		1		2		6
%		*50.0*		*0.0*		*16.7*		*33.3*		*100.0*
m+f	31		22		10		9		72	
%	*43.1*		*30.6*		*13.9*		*12.5*		*100.0*	

Source: Census Enumerators' Books 1851 and 1861; Registrar's District Dudley; PRO Microfilm No. HO 1072030 and RG 9/2047/2048

Quite obviously the standard of age reporting varied from place to place but the margin of error is probably only small. It must also be remembered that this method has only really measured consistency between Censuses, and the ages given might have been wrong at both Censuses, thus compounding the margin of error. However, given these qualifications, there is enough confidence that the reporting of ages by the population of Lower Gornal in the mid-nineteenth century was correct, and therefore it is possible to use such data to analyse the age structure with a degree of accuracy.

Of the methodological problems facing the researcher perhaps those associated with sampling cause most concern, not only because of the need to decide how the sample is to be obtained, but also because of doubts about the value, in terms of their representitiveness, of samples obtained by any method. The need to sample is obvious when faced with the daunting volume of the Census enumerators' books and thus it is necessary to try to discover what we need to know by looking at only part of the evidence. Whether this is a feasible course of action will depend partly on the variability of the sample items, and partly on how evenly the relevant information is scattered through the total documentary evidence available. Since the enumerators' books are fairly uniform in content it would seem that, *at face value*, they are likely to yield reasonably reliable information. (20)

The Census categorised individuals into households and it would seem obvious to use these as the sampling units, while it will also be necessary at times to use the individual within the household as the sample unit. This is necessary in establishing both age and gender structure of the sample populations. (21) The sample of households made should, of course, contain a full range of all those features which are the object of the research. Roger Schofield warned of the inherent bias in making anything like a deliberate selection and recommended leaving the selection of the sample units to chance by using random number tables. (22) Each sample unit then has to be numbered and those corresponding to the random number sequence then form the total sample. (23)

This method was not adopted for this research, due in part to the practical difficulties of numbering items which are being read from microfilm or microfiche, and in part to Schofield's own admission that *"it may seem to be a rather long-winded means of drawing items for a sample."* (24) Thus it was necessary and indeed more convenient to use a non-random sampling technique and therefore two different sampling methods were used in this research: for the coalmining households a total sample was taken; while in the

other working-class households a systematic sampling technique was adopted whereby every *nth* household was selected, and this sampling interval varied depending on the total numbers involved. Obviously the number at which the sampling begins may affect the overall result since the sample becomes predetermined after the selection of the first item, and, if there is any rhythm or periodicity in the way the households have been enumerated then it is clear that this may distort the representativeness of the sample. This could happen if, for example, workers sharing a particular occupation all lived in close proximity to one other. This was not found to be a significant problem with the households sampled except in so far as there may have been some clustering of coalminers in particular areas in Lower Gornal and of chainmakers in Cradley. The clustering of coalminers should not have caused any significant distortion to the sample of other working-class households which was made since where the *nth* household turned out to be a coalminer household, it was replaced by the next normally acceptable working-class household. (25) Where this resulted in too few items being sampled a further systematic sample was taken with a larger sampling interval sufficient to acquire the requisite number. It was only necessary to apply this method once for the sample of working-class households in Lower Gornal in 1891 due to the large number of coalmining households. The problem with the chainmakers in Cradley was a little more intractable since they form part of the range of the sample, but there is reasonable confidence that distortion has been kept to a minimum, partly because of the homogeneous nature of the working-class community in Cradley, and partly through ensuring that the sample contains a large number of items. A particular problem was faced with the sample of coalminer households from Cradley in 1851 since, although the sample is total in that it included all such households, it is in itself still a very small sample from which to reconstruct the structure of coalminer households. Here it is a case of the historian being forced to work with the evidence at his disposal, meagre though this may be.

Age Structure: Lower Gornal 1851

Tables 3.2 and 3.3, and Charts 3.2 and 3.3 show the age structure of coalminer households and a sample of working-class households, excluding coalminers in 1851, and while there are some similarities, the differences are more significant. Both coalminer and non-coalminer households show a predominantly young population with 48.5% and 46.1% respectively being under 15 years of age, possibly reflecting high fertility among

Table 3.2 Age Structure of Coalminer Households: Lower Gornal 1851

	Male		Female		Totals	
Ages	N	% of total	N	% of total	N	%
0–4	120	9.8	147	12.0	267	21.9
5–9	85	7.0	96	7.9	181	14.8
10–14	74	6.1	69	5.7	143	11.7
15–19	60	4.9	35	2.9	95	7.8
20–24	42	3.4	56	4.6	98	8.0
25–29	76	6.2	63	5.2	139	11.4
30–34	41	3.4	47	3.8	88	7.2
35–39	42	3.4	27	2.2	69	5.7
40–44	22	1.8	20	1.6	42	3.4
45–49	15	1.2	19	1.6	34	2.8
50–54	16	1.3	12	1.0	28	2.3
55–59	8	0.7	6	0.5	14	1.1
60+	15	1.2	8	0.7	23	1.9
Totals	616	50.5	605	49.5	1221	100.0

Source: Census Enumerators' Books 1851; Registrar's District Dudley;
PRO Microfilm No. HO 1072030

Table 3.3 **Age Structure of Sample of Working-Class Households other than Coalminer: Lower Gornal 1851**

	Male		Female		Totals	
Ages	N	*% of total*	N	*% of total*	N	*% of total*
0–4	109	*7.9*	123	*8.9*	232	*16.7*
5–9	102	*7.3*	102	*7.3*	204	*14.7*
10–14	90	*6.5*	114	*8.2*	204	*14.7*
15–19	70	*5.0*	64	*4.6*	134	*9.7*
20–24	62	*4.5*	59	*4.3*	121	*8.7*
25–29	45	*3.2*	37	*2.7*	82	*5.9*
30–34	34	*2.4*	52	*3.7*	86	*6.2*
35–39	42	*3.0*	40	*2.9*	82	*5.9*
40–44	32	*2.3*	31	*2.2*	63	*4.5*
45–49	25	*1.8*	26	*1.9*	51	*3.7*
50–54	17	*1.2*	17	*1.2*	34	*2.4*
55–59	16	*1.2*	14	*1.0*	30	*2.2*
60+	28	*2.0*	37	*2.7*	65	*4.7*
Totals	**672**	***48.4***	**716**	***51.6***	**1388**	***100.0***

Source: Census Enumerators' Books 1851; Registrar's District Dudley; PRO Microfilm No. HO 1072030

Chart 3.2

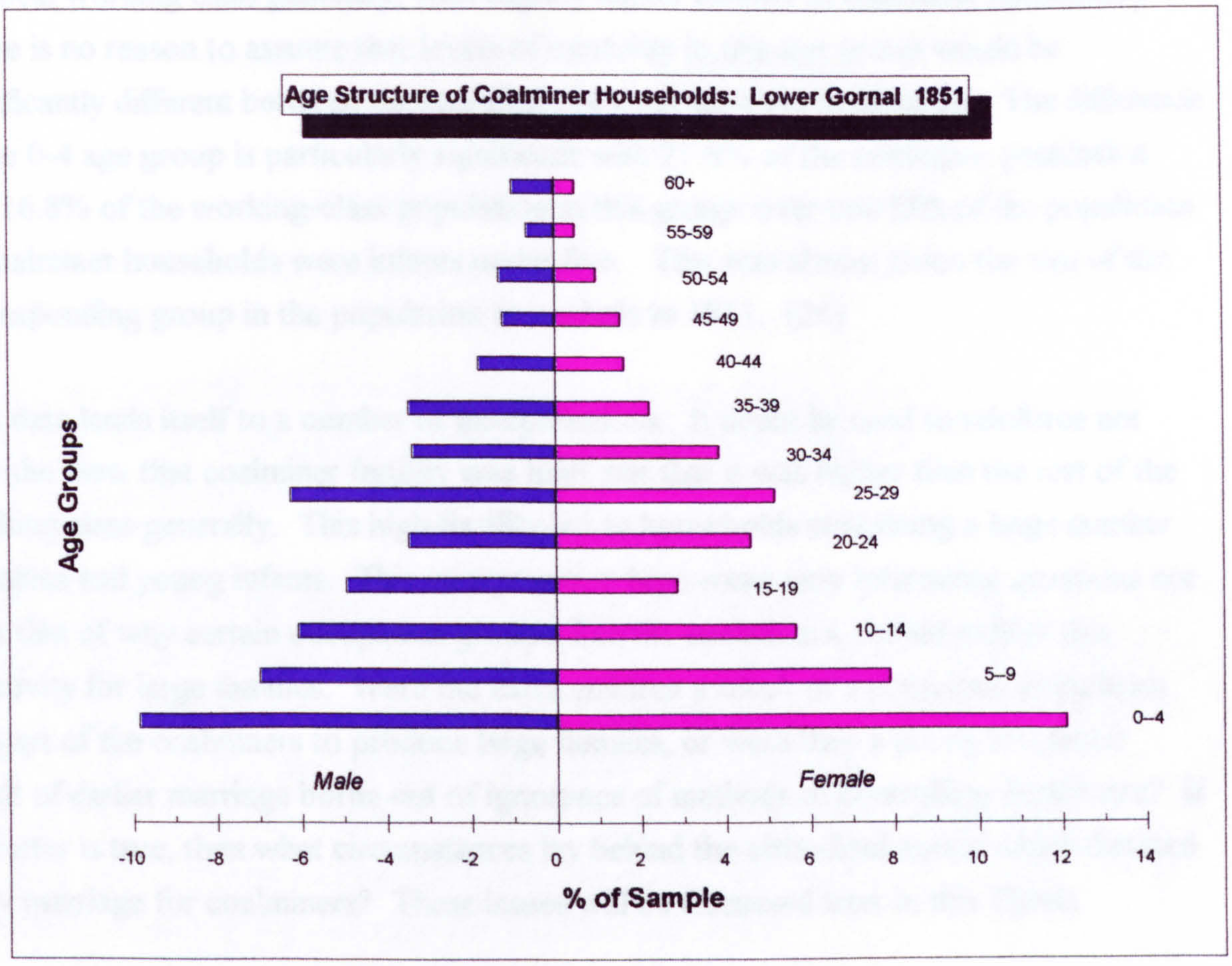
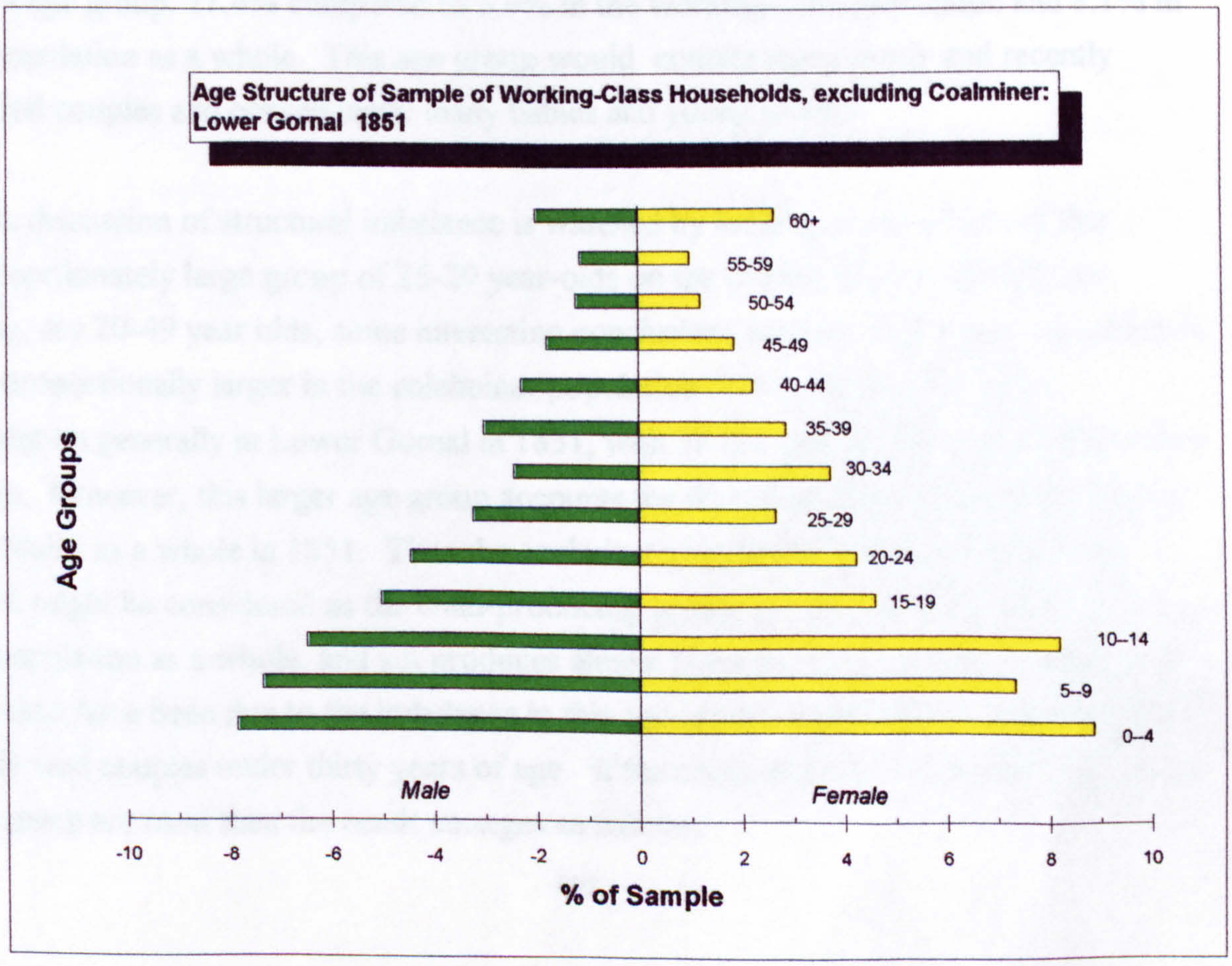


Chart 3.3



the local working class generally, with slightly higher fertility in coalminer households. There is no reason to assume that levels of mortality in this age group would be significantly different between the two kinds of working-class households. The difference in the 0-4 age group is particularly significant with 21.8% of the coalminer population and 16.8% of the working-class population in this group: over one fifth of the population of coalminer households were infants under five. This was almost twice the size of the corresponding group in the population as a whole in 1851. (26)

This data lends itself to a number of interpretations. It could be used to reinforce not only the view that coalminer fertility was high, but that it was higher than the rest of the working class generally. This high fertility led to households containing a large number of babies and young infants. This interpretation begs some very interesting questions not least that of why certain occupation groups, like the coalminers, should exhibit this proclivity for large families. Were the extra children a result of a conscious attitude on the part of the coalminers to produce large families, or were they a purely incidental result of earlier marriage borne out of ignorance of methods of controlling family size? If the latter is true, then what circumstances lay behind the attitudinal norms which dictated early marriage for coalminers? These issues will be discussed later in this Thesis.

Another explanation for the disproportionate size of the 0-4 age group may be sought in the structural imbalance in the coalminer population itself, with a larger proportion in the 25-29 age group: 11.4% compared to 5.9% in the working-class population and 8.1% in the population as a whole. This age group would contain many newly and recently wedded couples and consequently many babies and young infants.

If this discussion of structural imbalance is widened by looking at the effects of this disproprtionately large group of 25-29 year-olds on the overall child producing age group, say 20-49 year olds, some interesting conclusions emerge. This larger age group is also proportionally larger in the colalminer population than in the working class population generally in Lower Gornal in 1851, with 38.8% and 34.9% respectively in this group. However, this larger age group accounts for 40.6% of the population of England and Wales as a whole in 1851. Thus the coalminer population of 20 to 49 year-olds, which might be considered as the child-producing group, is very similar in size to that of the population as a whole, and yet produces almost twice as many children, and much of this must have been due to the imbalance in this age group, caused by the large number of newly wed couples under thirty years of age. If the crude numbers of people in this large age group are used then the result emerges as follows:

Number of children under 5 per adult aged 20-49:

In coalminer households in Lower Gornal	0.57
In working-class households in Lower Gornal	0.48
In the country as a whole	0.31

Coalminer households in Lower Gornal in 1851 were producing nearly twice as many young children per adult as the rest of the nation, and more even than the rest of the working-class among whom they lived.

Equally significant is the rapid fall-off in the size of the younger age groups in the coalminer households after the 0-4 group. The 5-9 age group, representing 14.9% of the total, is very similar in size to the corresponding group in the working class as a whole at 14.6%. One fairly obvious inference which could be drawn from this is that while coalminer households and the families within them produced many babies, age-specific mortality soon removed these extra babies and restored the age distribution of coalminer households to something more like the working-class norm.

The structural imbalance in the coalminer population as a result of the disproportionately large 25-29 age group is worth a closer examination if its causes are to be sought. It would be convenient to look for some combination of two factors to account for the extra 25-29 year-olds: in-migration of young men, either from a distance or from within the Black Country, searching for work and in need of temporary accommodation; and short-distance migration of young coalminer families, perhaps moving closer to their work, suggestions which would seem to be supported by the economic expansion of coalmining in the area in the second half of the nineteenth century. (27)

However, examination of the group of 25-29 year-olds does not lend itself to this analysis. Of the 76 men in this age group, only two originate from outside the area, with just seven from the counties surrounding the Black Country. Of the remaining 67, only five had moved from neighbouring villages or towns of the Black Country, while the vast majority of the age group, 80.3%, had their origins in the parish of Sedgley itself of which Lower Gornal was part. The parish, however, was large and the place of birth data in the Census may well be hiding short-distance movement of coalminers seeking to move closer to their places of work. All the 25-29 year-old men who had moved into Lower

Gornal by 1851, either from a long-distance or from the surrounding area, were married, many with young families. Seventeen of the 76 men in this age group, 22.4%, were sharing accommodation, but of these, six were sons who had not yet left home, and three were sons-in-law of the head of household with whom they shared. These were men who had not yet left their parents' homes or who were sharing their wives' homes, probably as temporary accommodation. Of the remaining eight men who were sharing accommodation, only three were single and none of these were from outside the immediate area. None of this fits the expected profile of young single men sharing accommodation with established families. Thus from this evidence it may be possible to suggest that there had been some very short-distance movement of both single men and men with wives and young families into Lower Gornal from the immediate surrounding area by 1851, probably seeking to be nearer their places of work. However, very few of the 25-29 year-olds were in-migrants from a distance greater than ten miles Also, a pattern of young men and women moving into the area and either setting up home or sharing accommodation with relatives or other coalminer families does not emerge from this evidence. The structural imbalance in the age distribution of the coalminer population, caused by an overlarge 25-29 age group, remains difficult to explain.

At the other end of the age spectrum there were also some significant differences. While only 3.1% of the population of coalminer households were over 55, this age-group represented 6.9% of the working-class sample excluding coalminer households. It would be easy to see this as a consequence of coalmining employment, with chronic disease, disabling injury and accident fatality taking their toll on the coalmining population. Indeed, of the sample of 23 men in coalminer households over the age of 55, only 3 were over 65 and only one of these was a coalminer, while the mean age of all the coalminers over 55 was only 59.6 years. There may, of course, have been some out-migration of the coalminer population in these older age groups: some possibly seeking cheaper accommodation elsewhere; some perhaps seeking to be closer to their older children on whom they might become dependent with advancing age.

However, while in this age-group there is a greater proportion of males in the working-class population than amongst the coalminers (3.2% compared to 1.9%), there is an even greater proportion of females (3.7% compared to 1.2%). Of the sample of 14 women over the age of 55 in coalminer households, 12 were married to coalminers and their mean age was only 59.6 years, exactly the same as that of their husbands. Obviously working class life carried a heavy burden for all women and led to reduced life expectancy, but why were working-class women who were not married to coalminers

living longer than the wives of coalminers? Did coalmining as an occupation mean an early grave for women as well as for their husbands, and, if so, which aspects of their lives were contributing to a shortened life span? Was it frequent child-bearing, appalling living conditions, lives worn out by the constant drudgery of servicing the working needs of mining husbands and sons, or lives spent under the omni-present threat of widowhood and ensuing poverty ?

Chart 3.7 shows the age structure of the population of England and Wales in 1851 using the same age groups as for Lower Gornal and it throws into even greater relief the anomalies of the coalminer population compared to the rest of the population. The proportion of children and young persons under fifteen is much greater amongst the coalminers, reflecting the greater fertility and structural imbalance in coalminer households discussed above. The 15-19 female age-group is seriously under-represented in coalminer households, inviting speculation as to where these missing girls were in 1851, and domestic service suggests itself as the fairly obvious answer. If the mining community could not provide sufficient work for them then perhaps they were forced to leave to find work outside, returning only to marry and settle down, since the 20-24 age-group is similar in size to that for the population as a whole. These girls may have been tempted into domestic service since the growing town of Dudley was near with numerous middle-class homes in need of servants, but this is no more than an unsupported suggestion. The implication here, however, is that girls from coalminer families tended to look for and find husbands in their home communities rather than their adopted ones, perhaps retaining links with their home communities which survived a temporary residence elsewhere during the years when they needed to work. It is, however, difficult to see why there was a shortage of work for young women in Lower Gornal since there was still a lot a nailmaking and this occupation was by the mid-nineteenth century dominated by women. Alternatively, the female 20-24 age-group in coalminer households may have returned to normal size since women of this age were sucked back into the community as wives by the large number of men in the 25-29 age-group, assuming that an age differential of this magnitude between marriage partners was common at this time. Perhaps it is fanciful to imagine some of these young women fleeing their homes at the earliest opportunity to escape the drudgery of coalminer domestic life which was the daily lot of their mothers, and there is certainly no hard evidence to support this. In the absence of any convincing supporting evidence, such a theory must remain no more than speculation.

There are also some significant differences in the older age-groups in coalminer households compared to the rest of the population. Above the age of forty, the groups are smaller in the coalminer households accounting for only 11.6% of the total, compared with 24.1% in the population as a whole, reinforcing the impression that coalminer households contained predominantly young families. This difference becomes even more marked amongst the older age groups. While the over-55 age group make up 10.3% of the population as a whole, in coalminer households they only form 3.1% of the total. Of the sample of 23 men aged over 55 from the coalminer households only three were over 65 years of age and of these only one was a miner. The average age of coalminers over 55 was only 59.6 years. It is very difficult to come to any other conclusion but that coalmining resulted in a relatively short life span and that the chances of surviving beyond 65 years of age were extremely slim. Moreover, the difference is even more marked amongst the female population over 55, for whereas in the population as a whole in 1851 they represent 5.6% of the total, in coalminer households they form only 1.2% of the total. The average age of the coalminer wives over 55 years of age in the sample was a mere 59.6 years, like their husbands. If coalmining resulted in a relatively young population, since the miners' life-span tended to be short, then this was even more true for their wives.

Thus, in 1851 the coalminer households, and the families within them, were significantly different in key aspects of their age structure, not only to the rest of the population, but also to the rest of the working class among whom they lived and worked.

Age Structure: Lower Gornal 1891

By 1891 the coalminer households in Lower Gornal and those of the working class shared more features in common, and this data is presented in Tables 3.4 and 3.5, and Charts 3.4 and 3.5. Both populations are again predominantly young, with the coalminer population having a slightly higher proportion of young persons under fifteen, 46.5% compared to 40.4% for the rest of the working class. More importantly, these figures, represent a fall in size of this age group compared with 1851: from 48.4% to 46.5% for coalminers and from 46.1% to 40.4% for the working class. For the working class as a whole this resulted from an overall fall in the size of the under-fifteen age group, but for the coalminers this seems to be the result of a fall in the relative size of the 0-4 age group: from 21.9% to 18.2%; a not insignificant fall of 3.7%. Thus, while there was a greater fall in the under-fifteens for the working class as a whole than for coalminers, in the

Table 3.4 Age Structure of Coalminer Households: Lower Gornal 1891

Ages	Male		Female		Totals	
	N	% *of total*	N	% *of total*	N	% *of total*
0—4	244	*8.9*	258	*9.4*	502	*18.2*
5—9	208	*7.5*	208	*7.5*	416	*15.1*
10—14	183	*6.6*	180	*6.5*	363	*13.2*
15—19	160	*5.8*	133	*4.8*	293	*10.6*
20—24	114	*4.1*	109	*4.0*	223	*8.1*
25—29	97	*3.5*	92	*3.3*	189	*6.9*
30—34	85	*3.1*	69	*2.5*	154	*5.6*
35—39	78	*2.8*	74	*2.7*	152	*5.5*
40—44	64	*2.3*	64	*2.3*	128	*4.6*
45—49	51	*1.8*	45	*1.6*	96	*3.5*
50—54	43	*1.6*	41	*1.5*	84	*3.0*
55—59	36	*1.3*	32	*1.2*	68	*2.5*
60+	41	*1.5*	48	*1.7*	89	*3.2*
Totals	**1404**	***34.5***	**1353**	***32.2***	**2757**	***100.0***

Source: Census Enumerators' Books 1891; Registrar's District Dudley;
PRO Microfiche 12/2291 and 12/2292

Table 3.5 **Age Structure of Sample of Working-Class Households other than Coalminer: Lower Gornal 1891**

Ages	Male		Female		Totals	
	N	% *of total*	N	% *of total*	N	% *of total*
0–4	85	*7.9*	87	*8.1*	172	*15.9*
5–9	79	*7.3*	59	*5.5*	138	*12.8*
10–14	64	*5.9*	62	*5.7*	126	*11.7*
15–19	51	*4.7*	55	*5.1*	106	*9.8*
20–24	41	*3.8*	39	*3.6*	80	*7.4*
25–29	41	*3.8*	44	*4.1*	85	*7.9*
30–34	30	*2.8*	31	*2.9*	61	*5.7*
35–39	31	*2.9*	31	*2.9*	62	*5.7*
40–44	27	*2.5*	26	*2.4*	53	*4.9*
45–49	19	*1.8*	24	*2.2*	43	*4.0*
50–54	21	*1.9*	23	*2.1*	44	*4.1*
55–59	14	*1.3*	17	*1.6*	31	*2.9*
60+	38	*3.5*	40	*3.7*	78	*7.2*
Totals	**541**	***50.1***	**538**	***49.9***	**1079**	***100.0***

Source: Census Enumerators' Books 1891; Registrar's District Dudley; PRO Microfiche 12/2291 and 12/2292

Chart 3.4

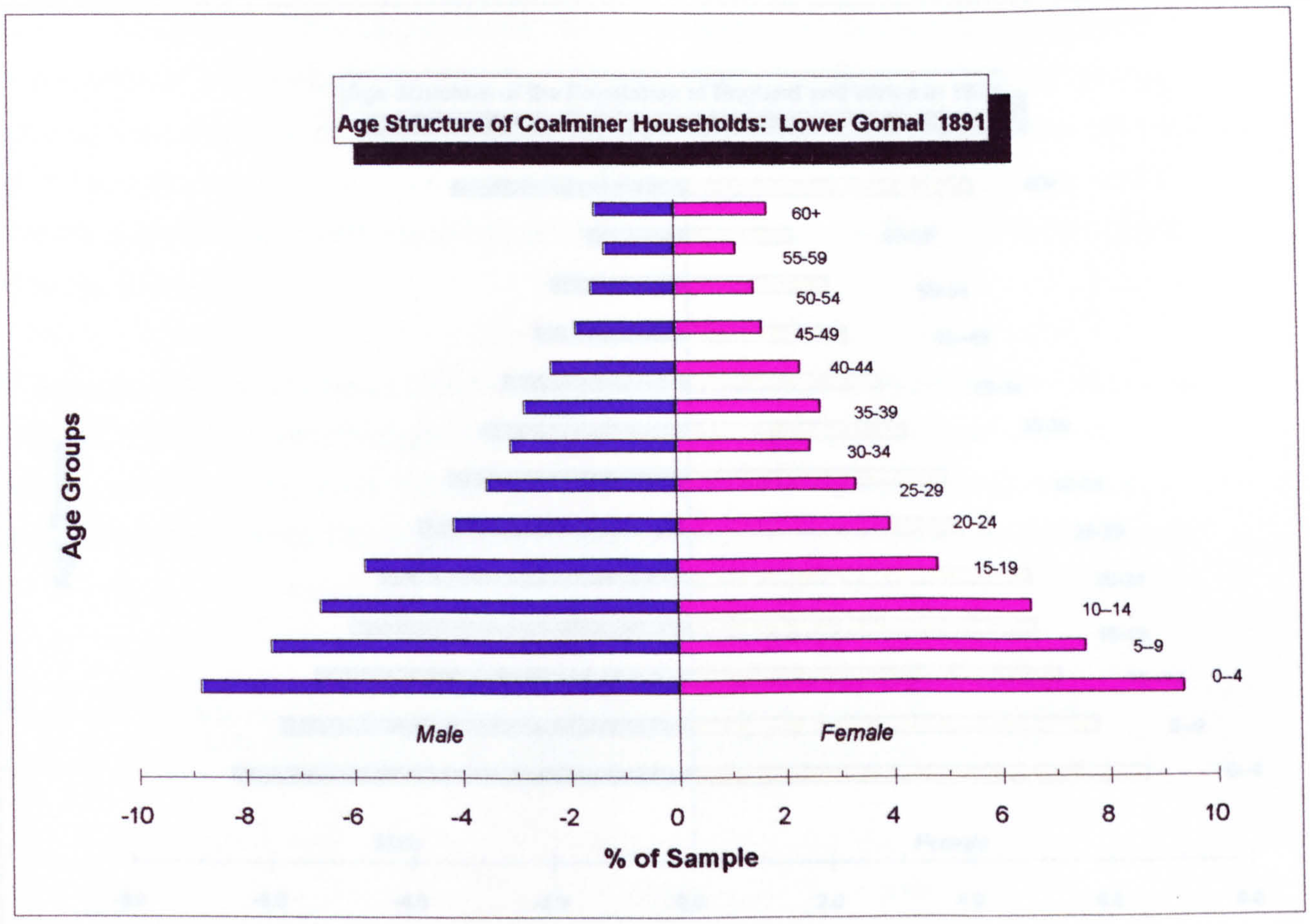


Chart 3.5

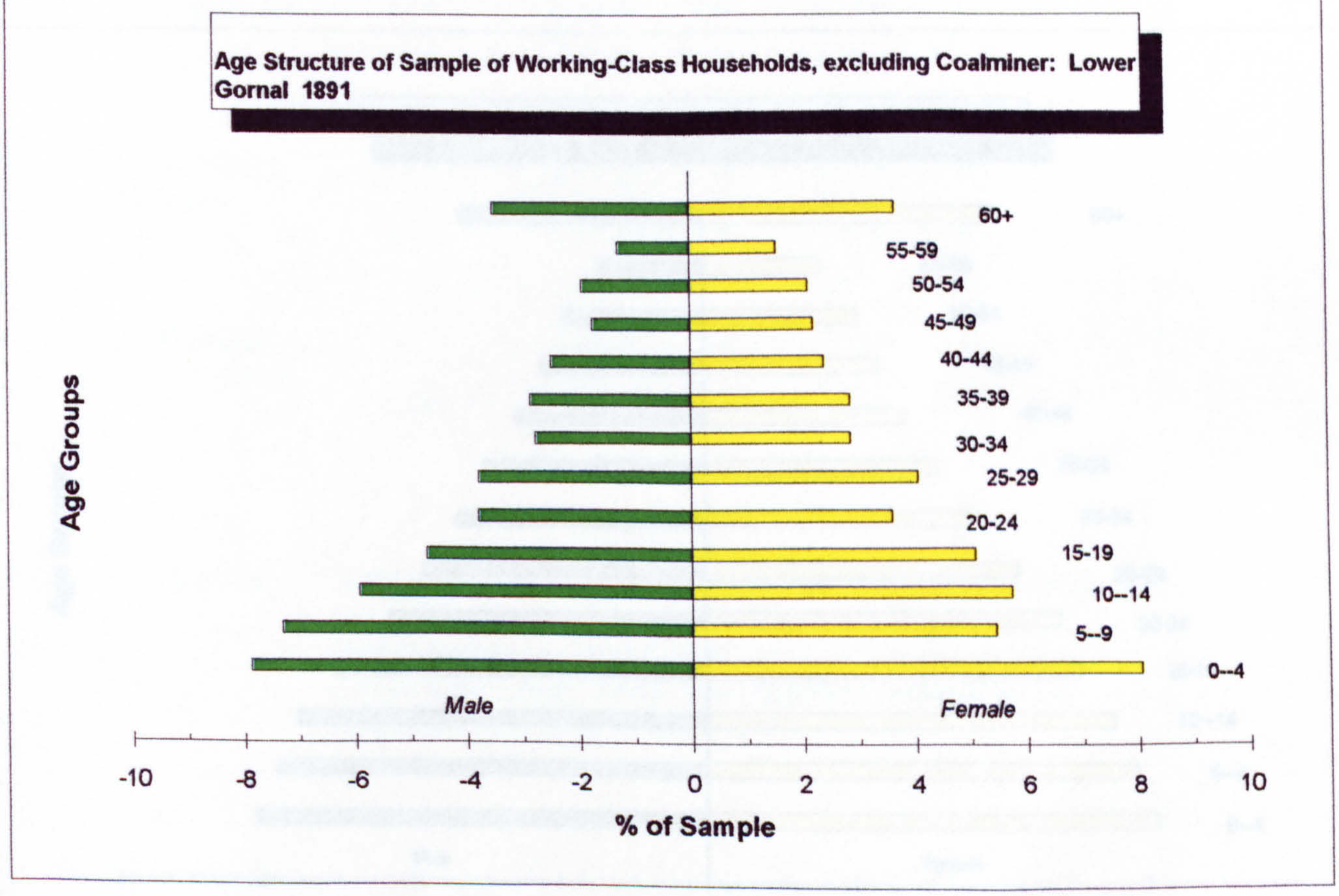
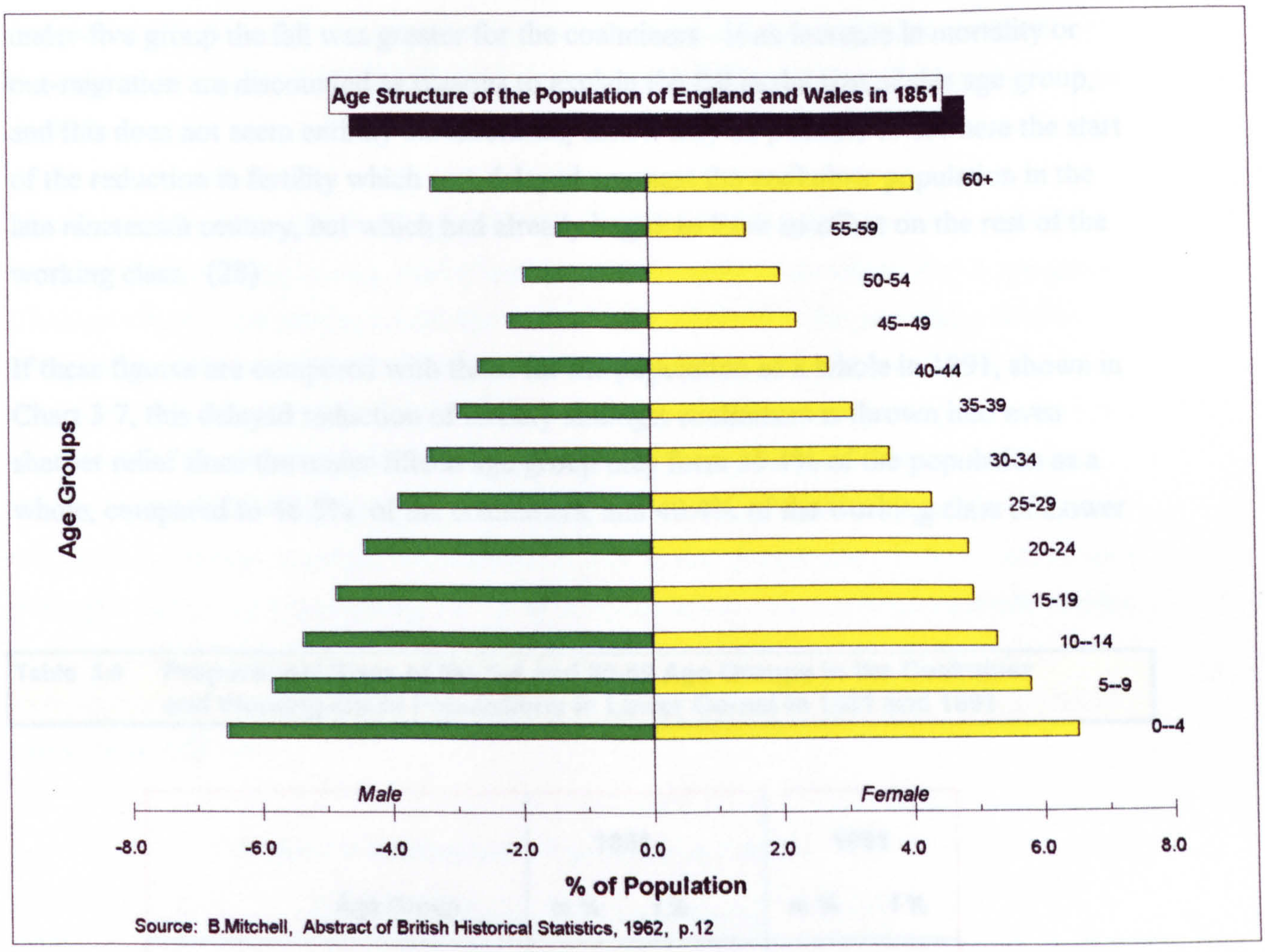
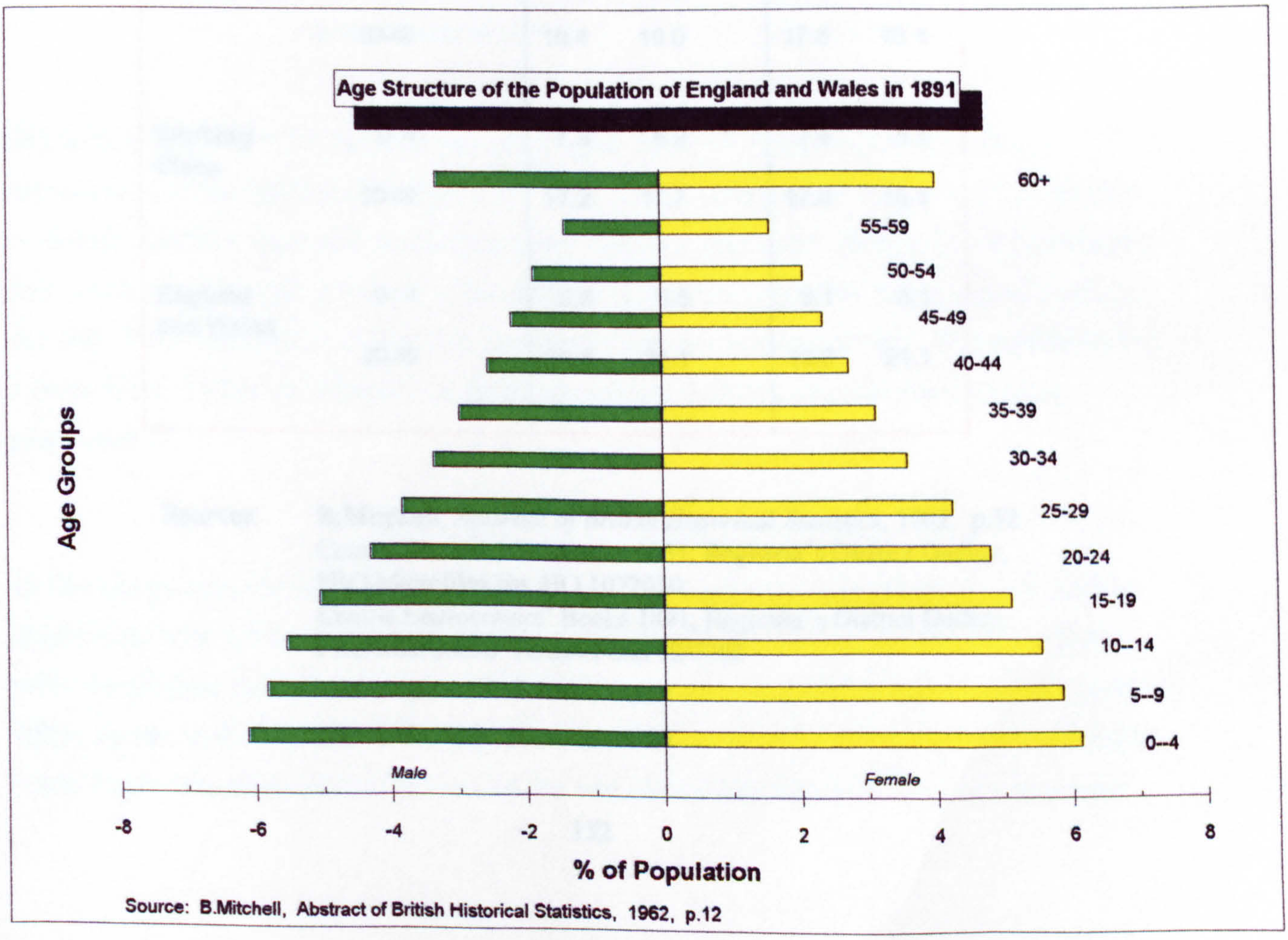


Chart 3.6



Source: B.Mitchell, Abstract of British Historical Statistics, 1962, p.12

Chart 3.7



Source: B.Mitchell, Abstract of British Historical Statistics, 1962, p.12

under-five group the fall was greater for the coalminers. If an increase in mortality or out-migration are discounted as reasons to explain the fall in the size of this age group, and this does not seem entirely unreasonable, then it may be possible to see here the start of the reduction in fertility which was delayed amongst the coalminer population in the late nineteenth century, but which had already begun to have an effect on the rest of the working class. (28)

If these figures are compared with those for the population as a whole in 1891, shown in Chart 3.7, this delayed reduction of fertility amongst coalminers is thrown into even sharper relief since the under-fifteen age group only form 35.1% of the population as a whole, compared to 46.5% of the coalminers, and 40.4% of the working class of Lower

Table 3.6 Proportional Sizes of the 0-4 and 20-49 Age Groups in the Coalminer and Working-Class Populations in Lower Gornal in 1851 and 1891

		1851		1891	
Age Group		m %	f %	m %	f %
Coalminers	0- 4	9.8	12.0	8.9	9.4
	20-49	19.4	19.0	17.6	16.4
Working Class	0- 4	7.9	8.9	7.9	8.1
	20-49	17.2	17.7	17.6	18.1
England and Wales	0- 4	6.6	6.5	6.1	6.1
	20-49	19.5	21.1	19.3	21.1

Sources: **B.Mitchell,** *Abstract of British Historical Statistics*, 1962, p.12
Census Enumerators' Books 1851; Registrar's District Dudley;
PRO Microfilm No. HO 1072030
Census Enumerators' Books 1891; Registrar's District Dudley;
PRO Microfiche 12/2291 and 12/2292

Gornal. While the coalminers may at last by 1891 have begun to reduce their fertility, they were still lagging far behind both the rest of the working class and the population as a whole.

This is reinforced by comparing again the 20 to 49 year olds, who may be considered to be the child-producing group, and by looking at the relative sizes of the 0 to 4 age group. The same figures are also given for the country as a whole in order to make a national comparison. These are shown below in Table 3.6 above. In England and Wales as a whole in 1891, 40.4% of the population were in this child producing age group, whereas this fell to 34.0% for the coalminers and 35.7% for the working class in Lower Gornal. However, while 40.4% of the population as a whole are responsible for the 12.2% in the youngest age group, amongst the coalminers this smaller proportion of 34.0% produced a youngest age group representing 18.3% of the population. Thus a proportionally smaller group of adults produce a proportionally larger group of children in the coalmining population. If the crude numbers of people in these age groups are used, then the result emerges as follows:

Number of children under 5 per adult aged 20-49:

In coalminer households in Lower Gornal	0.53
In working-class households in Lower Gornal	0.45
In the country as a whole	0.30

While this figure of 0.53 children per adult aged 20 to 49 in coalminer households represents a small fall from the figure for 1851 of 0.57 children, it shows once more that coalminer families were still producing more children than other groups in the population: they were indeed lagging behind in the general reduction in fertility being experienced in the rest of the population by the last decades of the nineteenth century. The coalminers in Lower Gornal were no different to those elsewhere in displaying this demographic phenomenon.

In the age groups above fifteen and below sixty the coalminer population shows marked similarities both with the rest of the working-class and with the population as a whole with the gradual reduction in size of successive age groups giving a more regular pyramid shape to the coalminer household age structure. Thus by 1891 the coalminer households were displaying more of the features of the rest of the population in their age structure,

although the gradient of the fall-off in successive age groups is steeper for the coalminer population than for the population as a whole.. There is still, however, a marked difference in the over-sixty age group, for while the working-class now conforms to the pattern of the rest of the population with 7.2% in this category, the same as the population as a whole, the coalminer households still have few people in this oldest age group, a mere 3.2% of their total. Just as coalminers were lagging behind in reducing fertility, so it seems that there was also a delay in reducing the mortality of both men and women at the other end of the age spectrum. However, this figure of 3.2% represents a substantial increase on the figure of 1.9% for 1851, showing that the coalminers were part of the downward trend in mortality which was an important feature of demographic change in the late nineteenth century. (29)

Sex-Ratio: **Lower Gornal 1851 and 1891**

The overall sex-ratio, males to females, in coalminer households in Lower Gornal in 1851 was 101.8 with a slight rise to 103.8 in 1891. As the area expanded economically in the second half of the nineteenth century, an increase in the ratio of males to females might well be expected with an influx, albeit small, of unattached males seeking work. However, in the economically sensitive 15 to 29 age group, from which it would be expected that most of the influx would come, this has not happened. Instead, a reverse trend is observable with the ratio of males to females falling from 115.6 in 1851 to 111.1 in 1891. This decrease can almost certainly be attributed to an increase in the proportion of women in the age group rather than a fall in the proportion of men, while this age group as a whole fell as a proportion of the total coalmining population between 1851 and 1891. These sex-ratio means obtained by aggregating the age groups do, however, hide some significant anomalies. Table 3.7 below shows the disaggregated sex-ratio data for the coalmining population in 1851 and 1891.

Thus it can be seen that all of the three age groups representing the 15 to 29 year olds in 1851 do show very significant imbalances between males and females with two of them showing very big imbalances of males over females, while the 20-24 age group has an imbalance in favour of the females. Deriving a mean from such disparate data really can give a distorted picture bearing little resemblance to reality. This disaggregated sex-ratio data also shows that the overall figure of 101.8 is made up of some very wide-ranging figures for individual age groups, from the very low figure of 75.0 in the 20-24

Table 3.7 **Sex-Ratio by Age Groups in Coalminer Households: Lower Gornal 1851 and 1891**

Age Group	Sex-Ratio m/f	
	1851	1891
0- 4	81.6	94.5
5- 9	88.5	100.0
10-14	107.2	101.7
15-19	171.4	120.3
20-24	75.0	104.6
25-29	120.6	105.4
30-34	87.2	123.2
35-39	155.6	105.4
40-44	110.0	100.0
45-49	78.9	113.3
50-54	133.3	112.5
55-59	133.3	112.5
60+	187.5	85.4

Sources: Census Enumerators' Books 1851; Registrar's District Dudley; PRO Microfilm No. HO 1072030
Census Enumerators' Books 1891; Registrar's District Dudley; PRO Microfiche 12/2291 and 12/2292

age group to the very high figures prevailing in the oldest age groups. Again, the value of the mean is brought into question when faced with such data.

There is very little other published gender data of either coalminer or working class communities generally with which to compare the figures above for Lower Gornal. Mary Mills found an overall sex-ratio of 111.6 in Cannock in 1851, a ratio that rose to 132.8 for the 16 to 30 age group. (30) Cannock was a relatively young mining settlement in 1851 and displays the demographic characteristics expected of such a settlement, while Lower Gornal, although expanding economically throughout the nineteenth century with accelerated growth after 1850, displays the characteristics associated with a more settled community. Lower Gornal does not conform to the stereotype of a mining settlement in the nineteenth century, which derives its characteristics more from those settlements typified by that of Cannock in 1851.

The rest of the working class in Lower Gornal in 1851 has a sex-ratio of 93.9, very close to the national ratio of 95.6; but while this fell to 94.0 in 1891, that for the working-class had risen to 100.6. (31) Thus the sex-ratio of the coalminer population does conform to the overall upward trend visible in the rest of the working class in Lower Gornal between 1851 and 1891. In the 15 to 29 age group the ratio falls even more drastically for the working class than it does for the coalminer population, falling from 110.6 in 1851 to 96.4 in 1891, at which level it compares with the national ratio of 92.7 for this age group. Again, in this aspect of their demography, the coalminer population was lagging behind the rest of the working class which by 1891 was beginning to show more conformity to the rest of the population in many aspects of its demography.

Age Structure: Cradley 1851

Tables 3.8 and 3.9 and charts 3.8 and 3.9 show the age structure of coalminer households and a sample of working-class households, excluding coalminers in 1851. Both coalminer and non-coalminer households, as in Lower Gornal, show a predominantly young population with 43.7% and 42.2% respectively being under 15 years of age. Again, like Lower Gornal, the difference in the 0-4 age group is particularly significant with 22.4% of the coalminer population and 16.5% of the working-class population in this group: over one-fifth of the population of coalminer households were infants under five.

As in Lower Gornal, this predominance of young people in the coalminer population is a function of greater fertility and an imbalance in the age structure of the coalminer population itself. Successive quinquennial age groups between 20 and 39 years are disproportionately large compared with both the rest of the working class and the population as a whole. The 25-29 age group itself in the coalminer population amounts to 10.2%, compared to 7.6% for the working class and 8.1% for the population as a whole. If the discussion is widened to include all the child-producing age groups, those between 20 and 49, as was done with the Lower Gornal data, the imbalance remains with 44.8% and 38.3% of the coalminer and working-class populations respectively being in this larger age group. If the number of people in this age group is compared with those for children under five years of age then the following result emerges:

Table 3.8 Age Structure of Coalminer Households: Cradley 1851

Ages	Male		Female		Totals	
	N	% of total	N	% of total	N	% of total
0–4	11	11.2	11	11.2	22	22.4
5–9	7	7.1	4	4.1	11	11.2
10–14	6	6.1	4	4.0	10	10.1
15–19	4	4.1	5	5.1	9	9.2
20–24	7	7.1	5	5.1	12	12.2
25–29	5	5.1	5	5.1	10	10.2
30–34	4	4.1	2	2.0	6	6.1
35–39	2	2.0	5	5.1	7	7.1
40–44	3	3.1	2	2.0	5	5.1
45–49	4	4.1	0	0.0	4	4.1
50–54	0	0.0	1	1.0	1	1.0
55–59	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
60+	1	1.0	0	0.0	1	1.0
Totals	**54**	**55.1**	**44**	**44.8**	**98**	**99.9**

Source: Census Enumerators' Books 1851; Registrar's District Halesowen; PRO Microfilm No. 1072034

Table 3.9 Age Structure of Sample of Working-Class Households other than Coalminer: Cradley 1851

	Male		Female		Totals	
Ages	N	*% of total*	N	*% of total*	N	*% of total*
0–4	51	*8.2*	51	*8.2*	102	*16.5*
5–9	43	*6.9*	41	*6.6*	84	*13.6*
10–14	42	*6.8*	33	*5.3*	75	*12.1*
15–19	32	*5.2*	33	*5.3*	65	*10.5*
20–24	36	*5.8*	25	*4.0*	61	*9.9*
25–29	24	*3.9*	23	*3.7*	47	*7.6*
30–34	19	*3.1*	23	*3.7*	42	*6.8*
35–39	20	*3.2*	11	*1.8*	31	*5.0*
40–44	19	*3.1*	14	*2.3*	33	*5.3*
45–49	13	*2.1*	10	*1.6*	23	*3.7*
50–54	9	*1.5*	11	*1.8*	20	*3.2*
55–59	9	*1.5*	6	*1.0*	15	*2.4*
60+	9	*1.5*	12	*1.9*	21	*3.4*
Totals	**326**	***52.7***	**293**	***47.3***	**619**	***100.0***

Source: Census Enumerators' Books 1851; Registrar's District Halesowen; PRO Microfilm No. 1072034

Chart 3.8

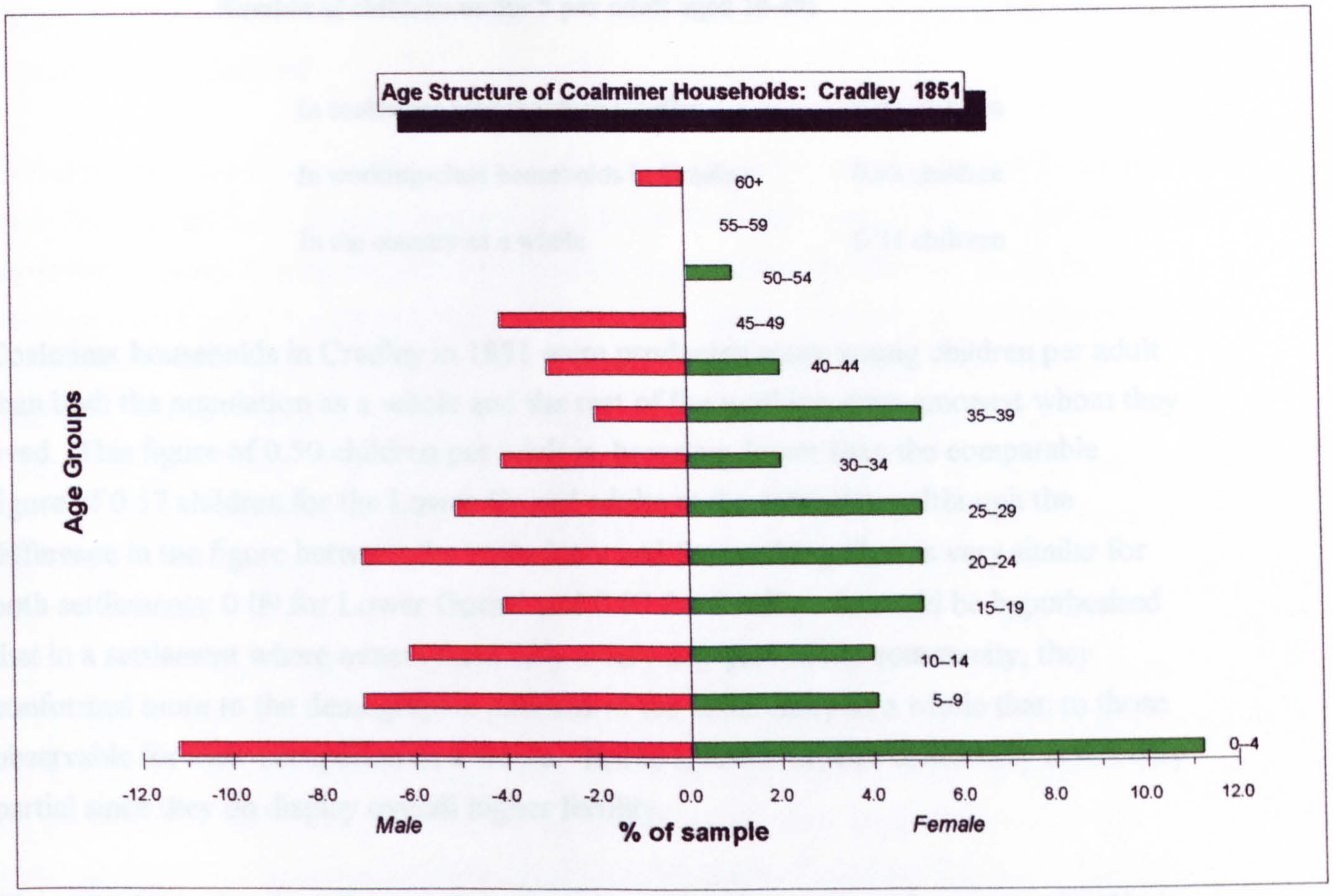
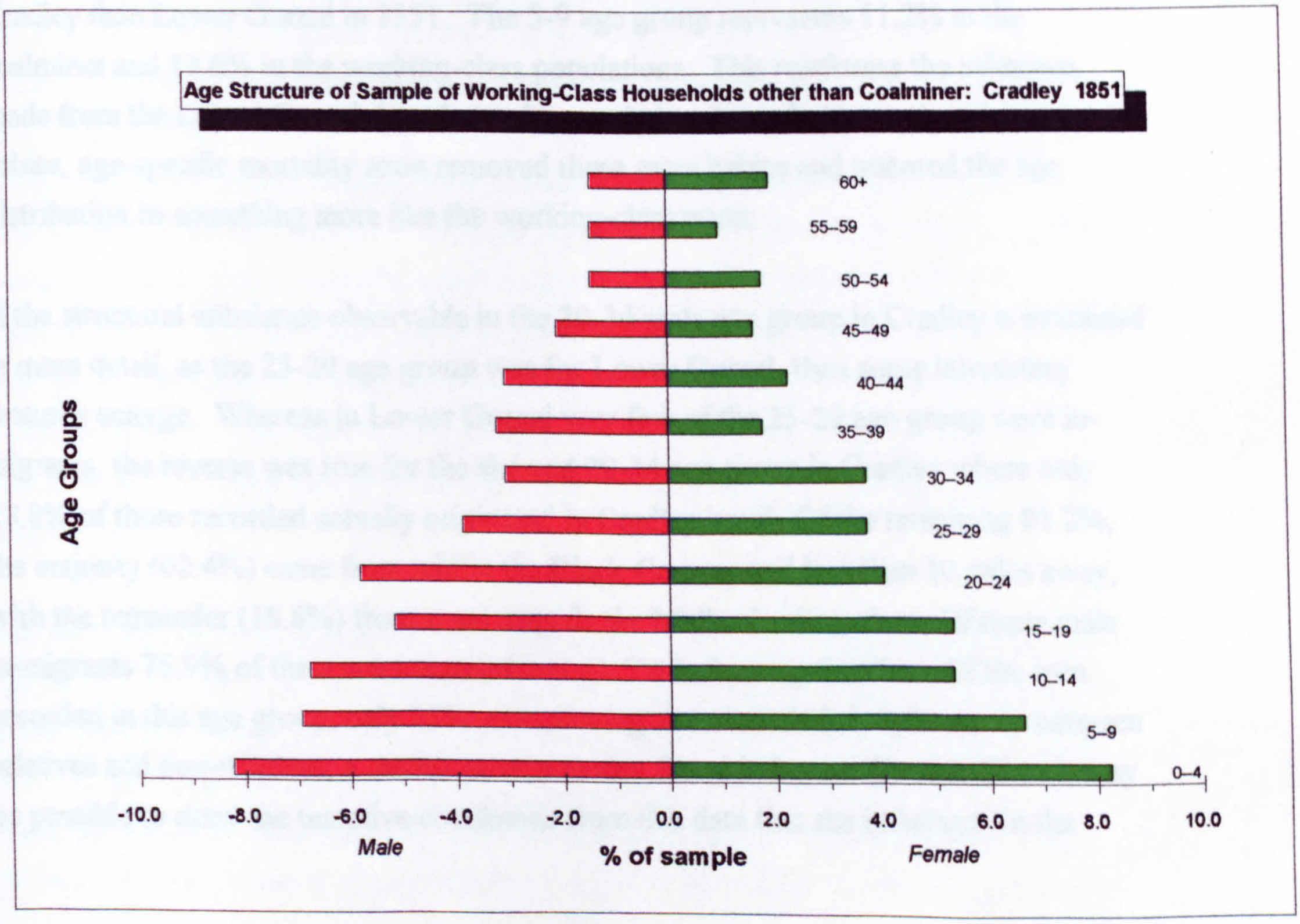


Chart 3.9



Number of children under 5 per adult aged 20-49:

In coalminer households in Cradley	0.50 children
In working-class households in Cradley	0.43 children
In the country as a whole	0.31 children

Coalminer households in Cradley in 1851 were producing more young children per adult than both the population as a whole and the rest of the working class amongst whom they lived. This figure of 0.50 children per adult is, however, lower than the comparable figure of 0.57 children for the Lower Gornal adults at the same date, although the difference in the figure between the coalminers and the working class is very similar for both settlements: 0.09 for Lower Gornal and 0.07 for Cradley. It could be hypothesised that in a settlement where miners form only a very tiny part of the community, they conformed more to the demographic patterns of the community as a whole than to those observable for their occupation as a whole. In 1851, however, this conformity is still only partial since they do display overall higher fertility.

The rapid fall in the size of successive age groups after the youngest is more noticeable in Cradley than Lower Gornal in 1851. The 5-9 age group represents 11.2% in the coalminer and 13.6% in the working-class populations. This reinforces the inference made from the Lower Gornal data that, while coalminer households produced many babies, age-specific mortality soon removed these extra babies and restored the age distribution to something more like the working-class norm.

If the structural imbalance observable in the 20-34 male age group in Cradley is examined in more detail, as the 25-29 age group was for Lower Gornal, then some interesting features emerge. Whereas in Lower Gornal very few of the 25-29 age group were in-migrants, the reverse was true for the skewed 20-34 age group in Cradley where only 18.8% of those recorded actually originated in Cradley itself. Of the remaining 81.2%, the majority (62.4%) came from within the Black Country and less than 10 miles away, with the remainder (18.8%) from areas outside the Midlands altogether. Of these male in-migrants 76.9% of them were married and 61.5% had young families. Of the men recorded in this age group, only 25% were sharing accommodation, split evenly between relatives and non-relatives, a similar pattern to that found in Lower Gornal. Thus it may be possible to draw the tentative conclusion from this data that the imbalance in the

number of males aged 20 to 34 is a result of short-distance migration mostly by married men with young families.

However, there are three problems which make such a conclusion too simplistic. As was shown in Chapter Two, Cradley enjoyed high levels of in-migration in the first half of the nineteenth century as a whole with 85.0% of all the coalminer heads, and 55.3% of the working-class heads originating from outside Cradley itself. Thus the 20 to 34 age group display the same migratory pattern as the coalminer heads as a whole, while they are different from the rest of the working-class in that far more of them originate from outside Cradley. Most of the adults in Cradley connected in some way with coalmining in 1851 originally come from outside the settlement: the 20-34 age group are no different in this respect. The second and more general problem arises from using Census data in studying migration in that it does not show when people migrated into Cradley, only that they originated from outside the settlement. It is possible that many of those in the 20 to 34 age group were migrants of long standing and owe their current location in Cradley to decisions taken by their parents rather than any decision on their own part to migrate to the settlement. They could therefore be the left-overs of earlier in-migration since an imbalance of adults in one generation causes an imbalance of children who will eventually work their way through the population over a period of time. The Census snapshot catches the imbalance without any indication of what came before or indeed what was to follow. The evidence of the birthplaces of children of fathers in the age group sheds very little light on this problem, mostly because the age range of children is necessarily small: some families had young children born outside Cradley, therefore implying recent migration, while others had older children born in Cradley, showing perhaps a greater locational stability in households which ostensibly have their origins outside the settlement. The third problem, and perhaps in the end the most intractable, is that of the smallness of the sample of coalminer households in Cradley in 1851. The twenty households with a coalminer head may be untypical of coalminer families and will therefore yield skewed data from which it may be dangerous to draw any firm conclusions.

The methodological problems involved with using a small sample can also be seen when examining the older age groups of the coalminer population. Taking the sample at face value, only two people or 2.0% of the total were over 49 years of age compared with 9.0% of the working-class population. For the females in the coalminer households the situation was even more extreme, with only one woman over 44 years of age. This absence of older people in the coalminer households of Cradley in 1851 may be a result

Table 3.10 Age Structure of Coalminer Households: Cradley 1891

Ages	Male		Female		Totals	
	Number	*% of total*	Number	*% of total*	Number	*% of total*
0– 4	34	*8.5*	32	*8.0*	66	*16.6*
5– 9	26	*6.5*	39	*9.8*	65	*16.3*
10–14	22	*5.5*	25	*6.3*	47	*11.8*
15–19	22	*5.5*	16	*4.0*	38	*9.5*
20–24	19	*4.8*	19	*4.8*	38	*9.5*
25–29	13	*3.3*	21	*5.3*	34	*8.5*
30–34	8	*2.0*	12	*3.0*	20	*5.0*
35–39	13	*3.3*	15	*3.8*	28	*7.0*
40–44	8	*2.0*	7	*1.8*	15	*3.8*
45–49	11	*2.8*	7	*1.8*	18	*4.5*
50–54	6	*1.5*	4	*1.0*	10	*2.5*
55–59	6	*1.5*	1	*0.3*	7	*1.8*
60+	6	*1.5*	6	*1.5*	12	*3.0*
Totals	194	*48.7*	204	*51.3*	398	*100.0*

Source: Census Enumerators' Books 1891; Registrar's District Stourbridge; Sub- District Halesowen; PRO Microfiche 375 1B

Table 3.11 Age Structure of Sample of Working-Class Households other than Coalminer: Cradley 1891

	Male		Female		Totals	
Ages	Number	% of total	Number	% of total	Number	% of total
0– 4	45	7.8	44	7.7	89	15.5
5– 9	45	7.8	34	5.9	79	13.8
10–14	42	7.3	28	4.9	70	12.2
15–19	34	5.9	32	5.6	66	11.5
20–24	25	4.4	21	3.7	46	8.0
25–29	30	5.2	25	4.4	55	9.6
30–34	18	3.1	15	2.6	33	5.7
35–39	8	1.4	15	2.6	23	4.0
40–44	12	2.1	9	1.6	21	3.7
45–49	20	3.5	10	1.7	30	5.2
50–54	11	1.9	8	1.4	19	3.3
55–59	9	1.6	12	2.1	21	3.7
60+	14	2.4	8	1.4	22	3.8
Totals	313	54.5	261	45.5	574	100.0

Source: Census Enumerators' Books 1851; Registrar's District Stourbridge; Sub-District Halesowen; PRO Microfiche 375 1B

Chart 3.10

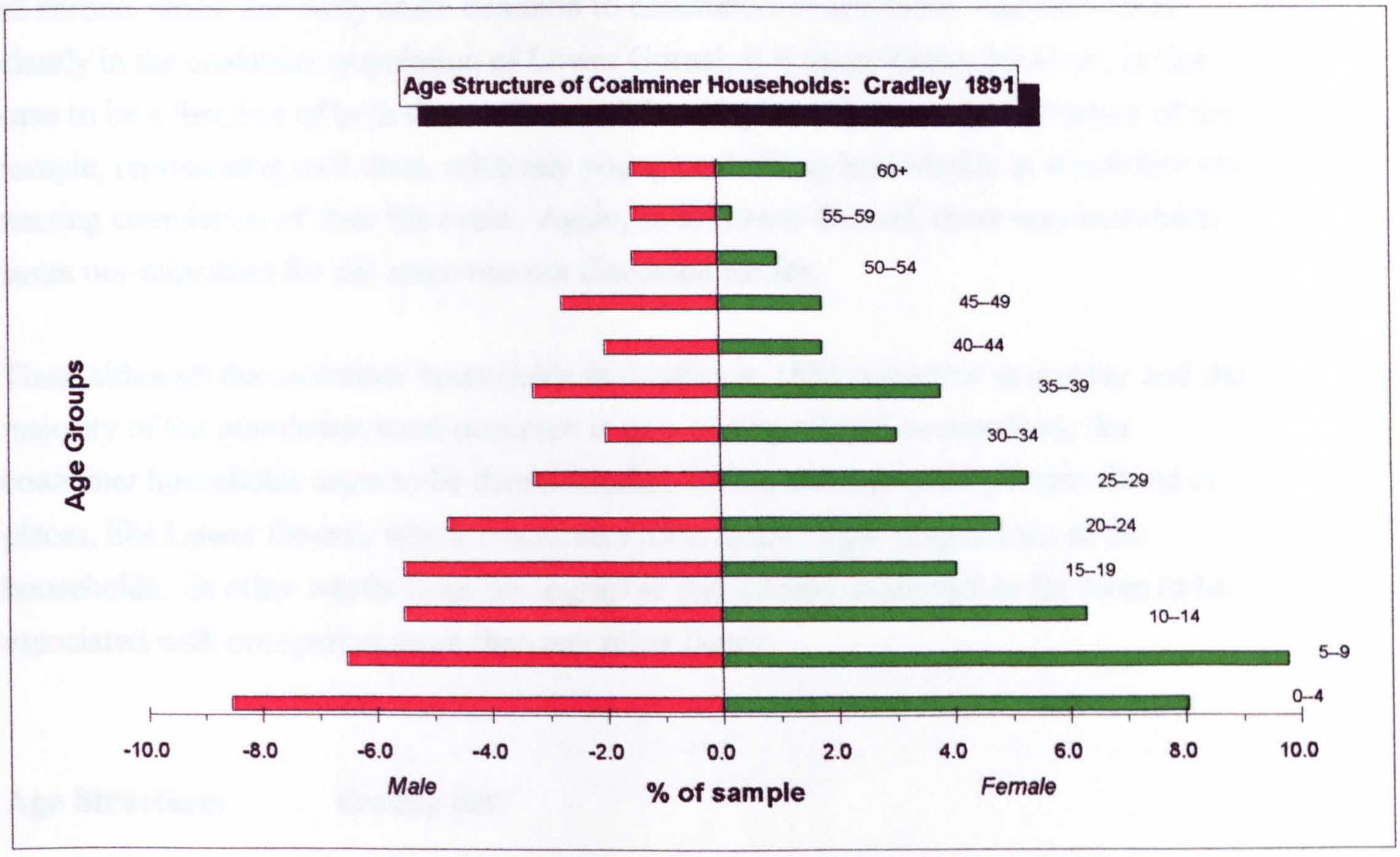
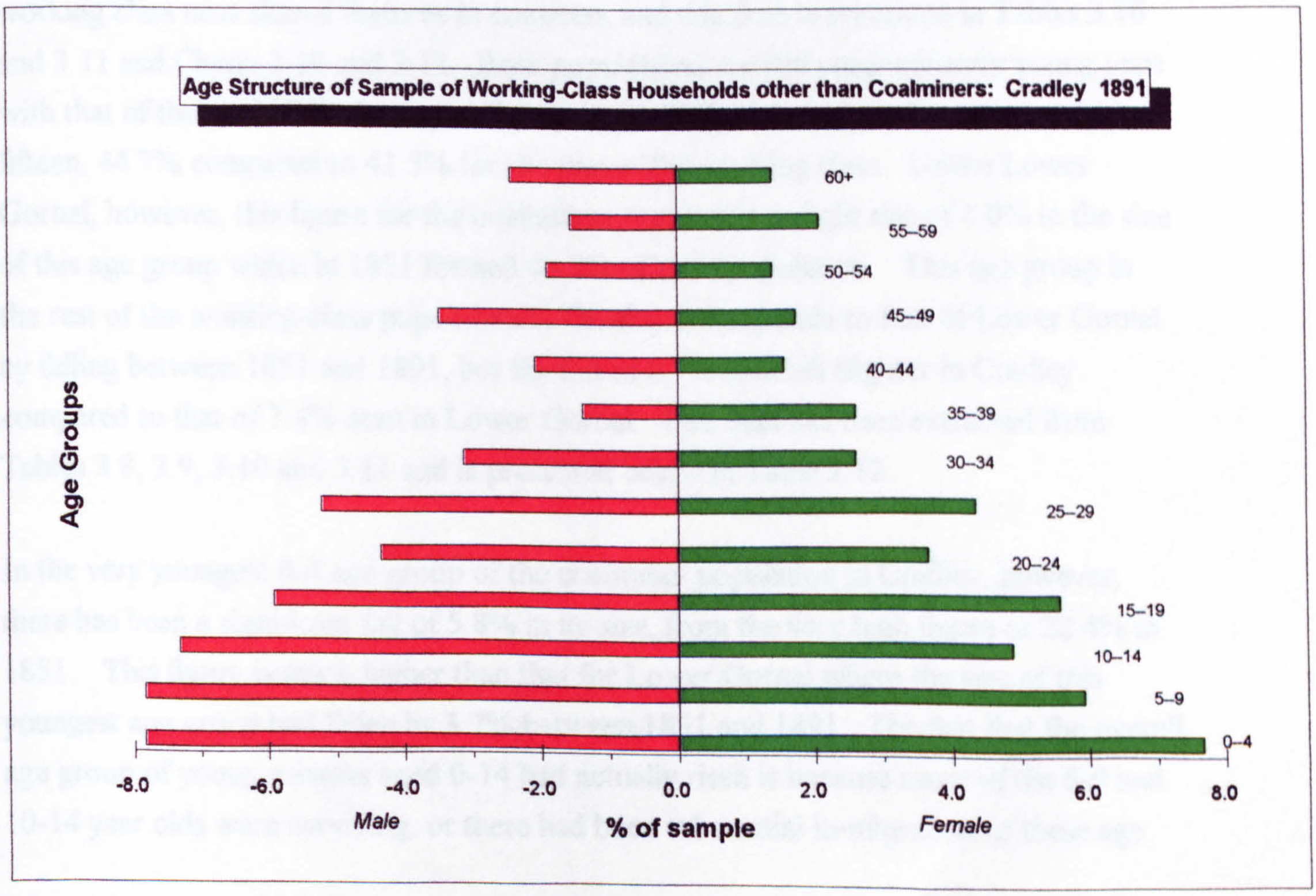


Chart 3.11



of chronic illness and early death common to coalminers everywhere, and seen fairly clearly in the coalminer population of Lower Gornal; it is more likely, however, in this case to be a function of both the smallness of the sample, and the untypical nature of the sample, representing as it does, relatively young coalmining households in which few are nearing completion of their life cycle. Again, as in Lower Gornal, there may have been some out-migration for the same reasons discussed earlier.

Thus, although the coalminer households in Cradley in 1851 were few in number and the majority of the population were occupied in non-mining related occupations, the coalminer households seem to be demonstrating certain demographic patterns found in places, like Lower Gornal, where coalminers form much larger proportions of the households. In other words these demographic phenomena examined so far seem to be associated with occupation more than any other factor.

Age Structure: **Cradley 1891**

In Cradley in 1891, as in Lower Gornal, the coalminer households and those of the working class now shared features in common, and this data is presented in Tables 3.10 and 3.11 and Charts 3.10 and 3.11. Both populations are still predominantly young ones with that of the coalminers having a slightly higher proportion of young persons under fifteen, 44.7% compared to 41.5% for the rest of the working class. Unlike Lower Gornal, however, this figure for the coalminers represents a slight rise of 1.0% in the size of this age group which in 1851 formed 43.7% of their population. This age group in the rest of the working-class population in Cradley corresponds to that of Lower Gornal by falling between 1851 and 1891, but the fall of 0.7% is much slighter in Cradley compared to that of 7.4% seen in Lower Gornal. This data has been extracted from Tables 3.8, 3.9, 3.10 and 3.11 and is presented below in Table 3.12.

In the very youngest 0-4 age group of the coalminer population in Cradley, however, there has been a significant fall of 5.8% in its size, from the very high figure of 22.4% in 1851. This figure is much higher than that for Lower Gornal where the size of this youngest age group had fallen by 3.7% between 1851 and 1891. The fact that the overall age group of young persons aged 0-14 had actually risen is because more of the 5-9 and 10-14 year olds were surviving, or there had been substantial in-migration of these age

Table 3.12 **The Size of the 0-15 Age Group in the Coalminer and Working-Class Populations: Lower Gornal and Cradley 1851 and 1891**

	Lower Gornal		Cradley	
	Coalminer	Working Class	Coalminer	Working Class
1851	48.4%	46.1%	43.7%	42.2%
1891	46.5%	38.7%	44.7%	41.5%

Sources: Census Enumerators' Books 1851; Registrar's District Halesowen; PRO Microfilm No. HO 1072034
Census Enumerators' Books 1891; Registrar's District Stourbridge; PRO Microfiche 375 1B

Table 3.13 **The Size of the 0-4 Age Group in the Coalminer and Working-Class Populations: Lower Gornal and Cradley 1851 and 1891**

	Lower Gornal		Cradley	
	Coalminer	Working Class	Coalminer	Working Class
1851	21.9%	16.7%	22.4%	16.5%
1891	18.2%	14.9%	16.6%	15.5%

Sources: Census Enumerators' Books 1851; Registrar's District Halesowen; PRO Microfilm No. HO 1072034
Census Enumerators' Books 1891; Registrar's District Stourbridge; PRO Microfiche 375 1B

groups by 1891. This data has been extracted from Tables 3.8, 3.9, 3.10 and 3.11 and is presented below as table 3.13 above.

As in Lower Gornal, if higher mortality and an increase in in-migration in the 0-4 age group are discounted, it is not unreasonable to see the beginning of a reduction in fertility in the working-class population of Cradley. The coalminer households show the greater fall, but were still lagging behind the working class generally in the last decade of the nineteenth century.

Again, this conclusion may be reinforced by comparing the 20-49 age groups, which it has been argued in this Thesis were the child-producing ones, with the 0-4 age groups, both in the coalminer population and the working-class population. The same figures are

Table 3.14 Proportional Sizes of the 0-4 and 20-49 Age Groups in the Coalminer and Working-Class Populations in Cradley 1851 and 1891

		1851		1891	
Age Group		m %	f %	m %	f %
Coalminers	0- 4	11.2	11.2	8.5	8.0
	20-49	25.5	19.3	18.2	20.5
Working Class	0-4	8.2	8.2	7.8	7.7
	20-49	21.2	17.1	19.7	16.6
England and Wales	0- 4	6.6	6.5	6.1	6.1
	20-49	19.5	21.1	19.3	21.1

Sources: B.Mitchell, *Abstract of British Historical Statistics*, 1962, p.12
Census Enumerators' Books 1851; Registrar's District Halesowen; PRO Microfilm No. HO 1072034
Census Enumerators' Books 1891; Registrar's District Stourbridge; PRO Microfiche 375 1B

also given for the country as a whole in order to make a national comparison. This is done below in Table 3.14 above.

Thus in the population as a whole in 1891, the 40.4% of the population which represents the 20-49 age group can be said to produce the 12.2% which represents the youngest age group. However, in the coalminer population the age group represents 38.7% of their population but they produce the much bigger figure of 16.5% in the youngest age group. Thus again, a proportionally smaller group of adults produce a proportionally larger group of children in the coalminer population. If the crude numbers of people in these age groups are used, then the result emerges as follows:

Number of children under 5 per adult 20-49:	
In coalminer households in Cradley	0.43
In working-class households in Cradley	0.43
In the population as a whole	0.30

This figure of 0.43 children under five per adult aged 20-49 shows a significant fall on the figure of 0.50 in the coalminer population of Cradley in 1851. Equally significantly, it was now in 1891 at the same level of the rest of the working-class population in Cradley. This would seem to confirm that fertility levels were falling in the coalminer population by 1891. Moreover, this figure of 0.43 is much lower than the corresponding figure of 0.53 for Lower Gornal in 1891. Where coalminers form only a small part of the working-class population in a settlement, they conform much more to the overall demographic pattern observable in the rest of the working class amongst whom they lived and worked. This was true of the coalminer population in 1851 in Cradley and even more so by 1891. Where they form perhaps a larger and more distinct occupational group, as they did in Lower Gornal in the second half of the nineteenth century, then a particular pattern of demography emerged among the coalminer population. However, as was said earlier, the coalminer sample is very small and may thus skew any analysis arising from it.

As in Lower Gornal, in the age groups above fifteen the coalminer population shows similarities both with the rest of the working-class and with the country as a whole in 1891 with the gradual reduction in size of successive age groups displaying the more regular pyramid shape typical of nineteenth century populations. The gradient of the fall-

off in successive age groups is also very similar to that of the working-class, while both are, of course, much steeper than that of the population as a whole.

At the upper end of the coalminer age spectrum the pattern observable in Lower Gornal of few old people with even fewer old women, is also present in Cradley: 4.8% of the population over 55 years of age compared to 7.5% in the working class generally; and women over 55 only accounting for 1.8% of the coalminer population compared to 3.5% generally. As in Lower Gornal, these figures do represent an improvement on those for 1851 when only 1.0% of the coalminer population survived over the age of fifty-five. Thus the data for Cradley confirms the notion that coalminers were part of the downward trend in mortality, a feature of demographic change in the nineteenth century.

Sex Ratio: **Cradley 1851 and 1891**

The overall sex-ratio, males to females, in coalminer households in Cradley in 1851 was 122.7, falling to 95.1 in 1891, the opposite to what happened in Lower Gornal where there was a slight rise. This overall figure of 122.7 does approach the kind of size which would be associated with a relatively young *frontier type* of settlement, but examination of the economically sensitive 15-29 age group does not show the high imbalance of males which would almost certainly be expected in such a settlement, with a figure of 106.7 in 1851 falling to 96.4 in 1891. However, the 1851 figure is, of course, based on a very small sample and this may be distorting the overall picture. Moreover, as the disaggregated figures in Table 3.15 show, there are some very wide ranging imbalances in the population from a low of 40.0 in the 35-39 age group to a high of 200.0 in the preceding one. The figures for 1851 should, therefore, be treated with great care.

By 1891 Cradley's coalminer population does in fact conform more to the national sex ratio of 94.0 than does the working-class population which had risen to 119.9, compared to 111.3 in 1851. In this respect, at least at first sight, the coalminer population was not lagging behind the rest of the working class, and indeed, not significantly behind the population as a whole. This overall figure does, however, again hide some interesting variations in the pattern which can be seen in the disaggregated data in Table 3.15.

Table 3.15 Sex Ratio by Age Groups in Coalminer Households: Cradley 1851 and 1891

Age Group	Sex-Ratio m/f 1851	1891
0- 4	100.0	106.3
5- 9	175.0	66.7
10-14	150.0	88.0
15-19	80.0	137.5
20-24	140.0	100.0
25-29	100.0	61.9
30-34	200.0	66.7
35-39	40.0	86.7
40-44	150.0	114.3
45-49	0.0	157.1
50-54	0.0	150.0
55-59	0.0	600.0
60+	0.0	100.0

Sources: Census Enumerators' Books 1851; Registrar's District Halesowen; PRO Microfilm No. HO 1072034
Census Enumerators' Books 1891; Registrar's District Stourbridge; PRO Microfiche 375 1B

The significant under-representation of males in the large 5-9 and 10-14 age groups has skewed the overall sex-ratio lower than it would have otherwise been. On the other hand these figures show a significant imbalance in favour of males in the 15-19 age group in 1891, due perhaps to both an outflow of females seeking work and to a small inflow of males in a rapidly expanding economic environment. In the middle years of the age spectrum, however, women dominate, perhaps as more and more men fall victim to the unhealthy nature of their work at relatively early ages. At the older end of the age spectrum, however, men again dominate. Only the very strongest have survived into old age, while the women in coalminer households have been ravaged by the depredations of

lifetimes spent in unremitting toil, which was the common lot for women in coalmining life in the nineteenth century.

The overall higher sex-ratio evident in the working-class population as a whole in Cradley in 1891, 119.9 compared to 111.3 in 1851, was also consistent with the overall economic structure of the community in the second half of the nineteenth century. There was a massive expansion of both iron making and blacksmithing in the area and this would inevitably have drawn in young males in search of the relatively lucrative wages prevailing during periods of rapid economic expansion, such as those in the early 1870's and the 1890's. George Barnsby maintains that the relative standard of living of the puddlers declined, while that of labourers and domestic workers was unchanged between 1850 and 1890 with what he calls "*starvation wages*" for much of this time. (32) This may well be true, depending on how much faith is placed in Barnsby's *correcting* of the figures for variables such as unemployment, but it does not diminish the argument that there may have been in-migration of young males over short periods of time during which high wages were prevailing. Cradley may well have been seen by them as a good place to work and possibly live during these periods, and this resulted in a high male/female sex-ratio. This has led to the seeming paradox of the coalminer population returning to more normal demographic patterns in their sex-ratio in a community which was changing itself and becoming more demographically abnormal because of economic change. In 1851, the coalminer population of Lower Gornal, a community of which they constituted a very substantial part, did have marked demographic differences, in terms of its age structure, to the working class population generally. By 1891 the coalminer population was beginning to display features of its age structure common to the working class generally, with some differences at both extremes of the age spectrum. However, in Cradley, where coalminers formed only a small part of the working-class population, they conformed much more to the overall demographic pattern observable in the rest of the working class amongst whom they lived and worked. This was true of the coalminer population in 1851 in Cradley and even more so by 1891. Where they formed a larger and more distinct occupational group, as they did in Lower Gornal in the second half of the nineteenth century, then a particular pattern of demography emerged among the coalminer population, otherwise they tend to conform to the overall working-class pattern.

NOTES for CHAPTER THREE

1 This research was discussed in its historiographical context in Chapter One. No research of household structure can ignore the work of Anderson on the working-class of Preston, and in a local context, the work of Mills and Billington on the Cannock Chase and North Staffordshire coalfields respectively.

2 **R.Lawton**, ed., *The Census and Social Structure*, (1978), p.17

3 Ibid., p.19; **E.Higgs**, *Making Sense of the Census*, (1989), pp.109-112

4 **M.Drake**, 'The Census, 1801-1191', **E.Wrigley**, ed., *Nineteenth Century Society*, (1972), pp.20-22

5 quoted by M.Drake, op.cit., p.25-6

6 Ibid., p.29

7 **W.Armstrong**, 'The Census Enumerators' Books: a Commentary', R.Lawton, op.cit., p.33; E.Higgs, op.cit., p.69

8 **D.Glass**, 'A note on the under-registration of births in Britain, in the nineteenth century', *Population Studies*, 5 , (1951-2), pp.70-88

9 E.Higgs, op.cit., p.67

10 M.Drake, op.cit., p.21

11 E.Higgs, op.cit., p.69; W.Armstrong, op.cit., p.35; M.Drake, op.cit., p.21-22

12 **D.Thomson**, 'Age reporting by the elderly and the nineteenth century census', *Local Population Studies*, 25, (1980), p.13

13 **M.Anderson**, 'The study of family structure', in E.Wrigley, op.cit.

14 **P.Tillott**, 'Sources of inaccuracy in the 1851 and 1861 censuses', E.Wrigley, op.cit., p.107-8; E.Higgs, op.cit., p.67

15 E.Higgs, op.cit., p.67

16 **A.Perkyns**, 'Age checkability and accuracy in the censuses of six Kentish parishes 1851-81', *Local Population Studies*, 50, (1993), p.38

17 The 1851 Census was taken on Sunday 3rd March and the 1891 Census was taken on Sunday 7th April

18 The size of the range of the confidence interval or the confidence limits of the sample estimate depend on the degree of confidence required and the size of the standard deviation of the sampling distribution. If the possibility of being 95% certain is accepted as giving reasonable accuracy then the size of the range of the confidence interval will be 1.96 (the normal deviate for 95% certainty) times the standard deviation of the sampling distribution either side of the sample estimate

obtained. The standard deviation of the sampling distribution is found by calculating the standard error of the sample. This is calculated for an estimate of a proportion of items in the population with a given attribute by using this formula:

$$S = \sqrt{\frac{(pq)}{(n-1)}}$$

where S = standard error of a proportion of items in the population with a given attribute
p = proportion of the sample items with the attribute
q = proportion of the sample items without the attribute
n = number of items in the sample

Applying this to the level of age consistency in the sample of 72 heads of household identified at both the 1851 and 1861 censuses produces the following calculation:

$$S = \sqrt{\frac{(43.1\% \times 56.9\%)}{71}}$$

$$= 5.9$$

If this is then multiplied by the normal deviate for 95 % certainty, or 1.96, then a range of +/- 11.6% can be applied to the sample estimate of 43.1% consistency. In other words, the statistical device tells us that we are 95% certain that the true proportion of those recording their age consistently in Lower Gornal is no higher than 54.7% nor lower than 31.5%.

19 The formula used to calculate the estimated sample size for an estimated proportion is:

$$n = \frac{pq}{V}$$

where: n = estimated sample size
p = proportion of the sample items with the attribute
q = proportion of the sample items without the attribute
V = the desired sample variance caculated using the formula:

$$V = \frac{d2}{t2}$$

where: d = half the desired confidence interval (i.e. +/-d)

t = normal deviate corresponding toconfidence level (i.e. for 95% confidence, 1.96)

For 95% certainty that the sample estimate lies within a confidence interval of +/-5%, then:

$$V = \frac{d2}{t2} = \frac{52}{1.982} = \frac{25}{3.84} = 6.5$$

If the figures which were obtained from the sample showing near consistency, 73.7%, are now substituted into the formula:

$$n = \frac{73.7 \times 26.3}{6.5}$$

$$= 298$$

Since this sample size represents a significant proportion of the whole population, it can be reduced by taking the finite population correction into account, using the formula:

$$n = \frac{n^o}{1+(n^o/N)}$$

where: n = actual sample size reduced by finitepopulation correction
n^o = estimated sample size
N = total population size

This now gives a corrected actual sample size:

$$n = \frac{298}{1+(298/936)} = \frac{298}{1.318} = 226$$

Since the actual sample taken was 221 households, it follows that this sample was sufficient to give a reasonable level of accuracy i.e. 95% or +/- 5%.

20 W.Armstrong, op.cit., pp.45-8; **R.Schofield**, 'Sampling in historical research', E.Wrigley, ed., op.cit., pp.146-7

21 R.Schofield, op.cit., p.148

22 Ibid., p.149

23 Ibid., p.150

24 Ibid., p.151

25 This method was used by Armstrong in his work on social structure in York in 1851: see *Stability and Change in an English County Town: a social study of York, 1801-51*, (1974)

26 See Chart 3.4

27 Both the extent of long-distance migration, and the expansion of coalmining in the south-western half of the Black Country are discussed in Chapter Two.

28 **R.Floud & D.McCloskey,** *The Economic History of Britain Since 1700, Vol. 1*, (1981), p.147; **R.Mitchinson,** *British Population Change Since 1860*, (1977), pp.23-4 and p.29-31; **F.Thompson**, *The Rise of Respectable Society*, (1988), p.53 and pp.71-2; **E.Ross**, 'Labour and Love: Rediscovering London's Working-Class Mothers, 1870-1978', **J.Lewis**, ed. *Labour and Love: Women's Experience of Home and Family 1850-1940*, p.76

29 R.Floud & D.McCloskey, op.cit., p.145-6;

30 **M.Mills**, *Women, Family and Community on the Cannock Chase Coalfield in the 1880's*, unpublished MA Dissertation, Wolverhampton Polytechnic (1987), pp.44- 7; **B.Mitchell**, *Abstract of British Historical Statistics*, (1962), p.12

31 Ibid.

32 **G.Barnsby**, *Social Conditions in the Black Country 1800-1900*, (1980), p.213 and 225-6

CHAPTER FOUR

Household and Family

This Chapter will describe and analyse the structure of the families within the households of both the coalminers and with a sample of the working class generally, and the similarities and differences between these households will be compared. This comparison will be made in the two communities chosen for study in order to establish whether there are differences in coalminer demography in those communities where coalminers dominate and those where they form just one occupational group amongst many. Comparison will also be made at two points in time, 1851 and 1891, in order to look for changes in family demography over a reasonable length of time. In particular, comparison will be made between levels of marital fertility and the differences in family size found in the two types of households, in order to address some of the problems raised by the historiography.

Reconstructing Households from the Census

The most important problem facing the researcher using Census data to reconstruct household and family groups is that of first, identifying, and secondly, defining the enumeration unit used by the Census Enumerators in the nineteenth century Censuses. Up to 1851 this unit for the enumerators had been the ill-defined "family" but for the 1851 Census this was changed to the 'occupier' with whom separate schedules were to be left. Such occupiers were defined as resident owners or persons who paid rent either for the whole house or as lodgers in just part of it. Moreover, the house was now defined as *"a distinct building, separated from others by party walls"*. (1) The enumerators were supposed to find out themselves whether houses had multiple occupancy and in such cases were to keep together the returns of all the separate occupant groups. In the enumeration books they were to mark such multiple occupancy with lines and the first person listed in each separate occupancy was to be designated "head". Thus everything depended on the enumerator's assessment of the nature of the house and exactly how he interpreted "separate occupier". However, it soon became obvious that this practice had not been followed uniformly by the enumerators, and indeed *"almost every combination of practice possible occurs"*. (2) The all too many possible combinations of living

arrangements enjoyed by the population in 1851 were wholly underestimated by the Census office. How was the enumerator, for example, to record two nuclear families where one was the married son with a family occupying and eating in a separate part of the house but paying no rent; or the married son and his family who did pay rent and share meals with the other family, but who slept in a separate part of the house; or, perhaps the arrangement causing the greatest source of difficulty, the single male lodger who may or may not have paid rent, eaten with the other occupants, slept in a separate part of the house, and who may or may not have been a relative; and what of the nuclear families of lodgers, with and without children who may be recorded as living within the co-residing group or as sharing the house? (3) The nuclear family of the head and his spouse and children within the co-residing group is usually easily discovered from the descriptions of relationships in the Census returns, but there is no evidence that the families are in fact sharing and here the researcher is forced to accept the record as it stands. (4)

Fortunately, such complicated shared occupancy does not occur too frequently and it should therefore be possible to impose some kind of definition of, and standardisation in, the use of such terminology as 'household', 'family' and 'lodger'. Various methodologies have been devised by social historians like Armstrong and have been further refined by sociologists like Anderson to serve the particular enquiries in which they were engaged. (5) The latter stresses the importance of what he calls the *"co-residing group"*, those who lived with the occupier, who interacted together on a regular basis, and who would be the nearest possible equivalent to what is nowadays understood in a common sense way as 'the household'. This group consisted of all those appearing in the enumerators' books under the 'head' of a particular occupancy. He defines a shared house as being one in which there were two or more co-residing groups. (6) This definition of shared occupancy, of course, assumes that separate occupiers can always be identified. Moreover, it may be important to identify the modern day concept of the 'nuclear family' of parents and children within the co-residing group; and where the group includes kin or lodgers not separately scheduled, the degree, frequency and intimacy of the interaction may be of vital importance, and should not, surely, be inferred from their mere presence in the co-residing group.

In this Thesis, Anderson's definition of the co-residing group, those living with the occupier, has been adopted, but for the purposes of analysis, three distinct elements of the co-residing group have been identified: the nuclear family of the head, spouse and children; the extended family of the head and all resident kin; and the multiple household

in which two or more nuclear or extended families share a house, or where single people lodge with such families. The nuclear and the extended family are fairly easy to identify from the Census record using both nominal evidence and that of relationship to the head. There are always occasional problems with the interpretation of certain relationships where children have been recorded as 'sons' or 'daughters' instead of grandchildren; where 'daughter' is used for 'daughter-in-law'; and most common of all, where 'in-law' is used to mean 'step'. In most of these cases the overall context makes the relationship clear and the general accuracy of the recording in both 1851 and 1891 for Lower Gornal and Cradley leaves little for the researcher to interpret.

It is, perhaps, the last type of residence which causes most problems of identification and interpretation since both single lodgers and families of lodgers are sometimes shown as part of the co-residing group and sometimes as separate occupiers sharing the house. Moreover there are occasions when, even though such people are shown as part of the co-residing group, one is left with the impression that they are sharing rather than lodging. It is for this reason in this Thesis that the category of multiple households is used for all cases of sharing or lodging by persons unrelated to the head. No attempt has been made to classify 'visitors' as distinct from lodgers for four reasons: in the first place the number of occurrences is very, very small; secondly, we do not really know how the enumerators saw the distinction between them; thirdly it is impossible to tell from the Census record how temporary was their visit, or at what point a visitor became a lodger; and finally, there may be some in the co-residing group recorded as relatives, but whose occupancy was only very temporary. As Tillott reminds the researcher, the safest process may be to accept the enumerator's designation at face value. (7)

Given the richness of the Census as evidence and with the proviso always that it is used carefully and sensitively, it is generally accepted that it is well above average quality as historical evidence, because of its universality and comprehensiveness, and because it contains information in a standardised format which allows uniform treatment by the social historian. (8)

Lower Gornal 1851: The Nuclear Family

The basic structure of coalminer and other working-class households is presented in Tables 4.1 and 4.2 , and Chart 4.2. The coalminer data is based, of course, on a total sample of all those resident in the enumeration district of Lower Gornal in 1851, whereas

Table 4.1 **Structure of Coalminer Households by Size: Lower Gornal 1851**

Size of Group	CHILDREN (a)		FAMILY (b)		HOUSEHOLD (c)		HOUSEFUL (d)	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
0	24	*10.4*	0	*0.0*	0	*0.0*	0	*0.0*
1	28	*12.1*	2	*0.9*	0	*0.0*	0	*0.0*
2	55	*23.8*	21	*9.1*	18	*8.0*	14	*6.2*
3	41	*17.7*	34	*14.7*	35	*15.6*	30	*13.3*
4	33	*14.3*	51	*22.1*	44	*19.6*	45	*20.0*
5	26	*11.3*	41	*17.7*	38	*16.9*	42	*18.7*
6	12	*5.2*	32	*13.9*	33	*14.7*	31	*13.8*
7	3	*1.3*	26	*11.3*	29	*12.9*	24	*10.7*
8	5	*2.2*	12	*5.2*	14	*6.2*	18	*8.0*
9	3	*1.3*	4	*1.7*	5	*2.2*	7	*3.1*
10	1	*0.4*	4	*1.7*	5	*2.2*	7	*3.1*
11	0	*0.0*	3	*1.3*	2	*0.9*	4	*1.8*
12	0	*0.0*	1	*0.4*	1	*0.4*	2	*0.9*
13	0	*0.0*	0	*0.0*	0	*0.0*	0	*0.0*
14	0	*0.0*	0	*0.0*	1	*0.4*	1	*0.4*
Totals	231	*100.0*	231	*100.0*	225	*100.0*	225	*100.0*
Total Persons	693		1146		1164		1221	
Mean Size	3.0		5.0		5.2		5.4	

Notes: (a) children in coalminer nuclear families
(b) nuclear coalminer families of parents and their children
(c) nuclear coalminer families plus any other kin sharing the house
(d) all persons sharing a house with a coalminer head

Source: Census Enumerators' Books 1851; Registration District Dudley;
PRO Microfilm No. HO 1072030

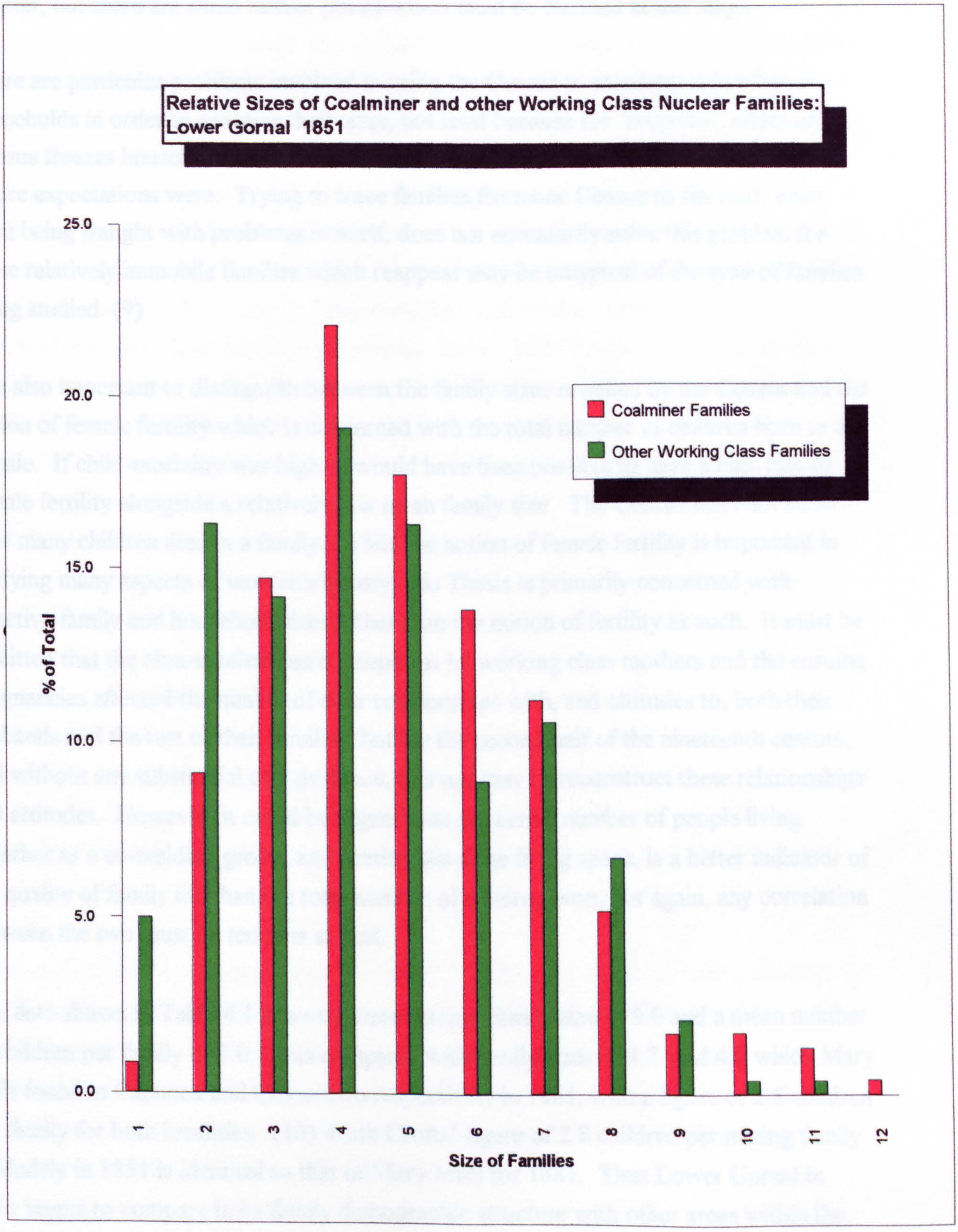
Table 4.2 **Structure of Sample of Working-Class Households other than Coalminer by Size: Lower Gornal 1851**

Size of Group	CHILDREN (a)		FAMILY (b)		HOUSEHOLD (c)		HOUSEFUL (d)	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
0	48	*17.0*	0	*0.0*	0	*0.0*	0	*0.0*
1	50	*17.7*	14	*5.0*	5	*1.9*	3	*1.2*
2	44	*15.6*	46	*16.3*	20	*7.8*	16	*6.2*
3	55	*19.5*	40	*14.2*	31	*12.0*	31	*12.0*
4	23	*8.2*	54	*19.1*	50	*19.4*	48	*18.6*
5	33	*11.7*	46	*16.3*	48	*18.6*	49	*19.0*
6	21	*7.4*	25	*8.9*	35	*13.6*	37	*14.3*
7	5	*1.8*	30	*10.6*	30	*11.6*	33	*12.8*
8	2	*0.7*	19	*6.7*	22	*8.5*	21	*8.1*
9	1	*0.4*	6	*2.1*	11	*4.3*	14	*5.4*
10	0	*0.0*	1	*0.4*	2	*0.8*	2	*0.8*
11	0	*0.0*	1	*0.4*	4	*1.6*	4	*1.6*
Totals	282	*100.0*	282	*100.0*	258	*100.0*	258	*100.0*
Total Persons	746		1259		1337		1388	
Mean Size	**2.6**		**4.5**		**5.2**		**5.4**	

Notes: (a) children in working class nuclear families
(b) nuclear wokrking class families consisting of parents and their children
(c) nuclear working class families plus any other kin sharing the house
(d) all persons sharing a house with a working class head

Source: Census Enumerators' Books; Registration District Dudley;
PRO Microfilm No. HO 1072030

Chart 4.1


Relative Sizes of Coalminer and other Working Class Nuclear Families: Lower Gornal 1851
25.0
20.0
15.0
10.0
5.0
0.0
% of Total
Coalminer Families
Other Working Class Families
1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
Size of Families

the data for the working class is based on a partial sample. The methodology of the data collection itself was discussed in the previous chapter and the conceptual framework which determined the presentation and use of this data was discussed earlier in this chapter, but there are some further points which must be clarified at this stage.

There are particular problems involved in using the Census to reconstruct families or households in order to examine their sizes, not least because the *'snapshot'* effect of the Census freezes households at a point in time: it is not known what went before or what future expectations were. Trying to trace families from one Census to the next, apart from being fraught with problems in itself, does not necessarily solve this problem for these relatively immobile families which reappear may be untypical of the type of families being studied. (9)

It is also important to distinguish between the family sizes revealed by the Census and the notion of female fertility which is concerned with the total number of children born to any female. If child-mortality was high, it would have been possible to have a high rate of female fertility alongside a relatively low mean family size. The Census does not show how many children died in a family. While the notion of female fertility is important in studying many aspects of women's history, this Thesis is primarily concerned with effective family and household sizes rather than the notion of fertility as such. It must be admitted that the almost relentless conceptions by working class mothers and the ensuing pregnancies affected the quality of their relationships with, and attitudes to, both their husbands and the rest of their families, but for the second half of the nineteenth century, and without any substantial oral evidence, it is not easy to reconstruct these relationships and attitudes. However, it could be argued that the actual number of people living together as a co-residing group, and sharing the same living space, is a better indicator of the quality of family life than the total number of children born, but again, any correlation between the two must be tenuous at best.

The data shown in Table 4.1 shows a mean nuclear family size of 5.0 and a mean number of children per family of 3.0. This compares with family sizes of 4.7 and 4.8 which Mary Mills found in Cannock and Chasetown respectively in 1881, with a figure of 2.8 children per family for both localities. (10) Ruth Crofts' figure of 2.8 children per mining family in Madely in 1851 is identical to that of Mary Mills for 1881. Thus Lower Gornal in 1851 seems to compare in its family demographic structure with other areas within the West Midlands region where coalmining was the predominant occupation.

If coalminer families are compared with other working class families in Lower Gornal in 1851 then some interesting differences emerge from the data, as shown in Table 4.2. The mean size of working-class households generally was 4.5, with a mean number of 2.6 children per family. One difference which can be explained fairly easily, however, is the number of parents per nuclear family. In the coalminer families on average there are two parents recorded for each, whereas among the working class families generally, a bigger proportion of them have lost one of the parents. Among the working-class families there were only 1.9 parents in each nuclear family on average. There were no coalminer heads who were widowers and the importance of the coalminer wife to the well-being of the family was discussed earlier: thus these families almost always had two parents. This is not to say, of course, that all coalminer families always had two parents: miners were made widowers just like other working class men; and miners' wives were often widowed, but these families simply cannot be *"seen"* in the Census returns as coalminer families, and therefore would not be included in the sample. A coalminer family can only be identified as such because it had a head who was a coalminer at the time of the Census. The overriding need of a coalminer to have a wife in order to enable him to do his job may, indeed, have meant that coalminers remained widowers for as short a period of time as possible, and therefore explains why they appear so rarely in the Census record. The sampling of the working class population, however, obviously included some widows, and these incomplete families have led to the very slightly depressed figures for family size. It would not have been correct to remove these families from the sample since this would have created an abnormal impresssion of working class families since some would, of course, be missing one of the parents, through death or desertion, or simply short or long term absence at the time of the Census. Meaningful comparisons can be made between coalminer and other working class families as long as these differences resulting from the sampling methodology are allowed for in the ensuing discussion.

Bearing these qualifications in mind, there were significant differences of 0.5 children and 0.4 persons respectively between coalminer and working class families generally in Lower Gornal in 1851. The data lends some support to the widely held notion that coalminers had large families and that they were larger than other groups of the working class. (11) Such views were perhaps expressed most forcefully about the early 20th century by writers like Chaplin who maintained that:

> *"those were the days when all mining was based on coal hewing and the thing to do was to have sons, and everybody went in for*

large families." (12)

There is no reason to believe that such views would not have been current in 1851, although evidence is elusive.

If it is accepted that a difference of half a person per family is significant then the conclusions presented here do differ significantly from those drawn from other settlements in the West Midlands in the 19th century. Edward Billington's study of the coalmining settlement of Silverdale in north Staffordshire led him to conclude that the coalminer households showed few significant variations from the other households there, a view consistent with John Benson's that it is important not to exaggerate the size of coalminer families. (13) Billington's data is, of course, of household rather than family sizes, but since there was no substantial difference in the numbers of lodgers between coalminer households and others which might have hidden true family size within the household, there is no reason to suspect that his conclusion is wrong. (14) Mary Mills' small scale study of High Town in 1881 showed that coalminer households were larger than other households in the area, but that the difference was only of the magnitude of 0.25 persons between coalminer and non-coalminer households. It should be remembered, however, that Mills' analysis here is of households rather than nuclear families and it is also not entirely clear whether her category of non-miners includes any substantial numbers of middle class households which might skew the mean. (15) It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that Lower Gornal was displaying a somewhat different household demographic structure both from other coalminer settlements around the same time and from the rest of the working class in Lower Gornal itself.

In one respect the data presented for Lower Gornal in 1851 does support that found for the region as a whole. George Barnsby, using Census data to compare the number of inhabited houses with the total population of the Black Country, produced a figure of 5.3 persons per house in 1851. (16) This compares favourably with the mean of 5.4 persons per coalminer houseful shown in Table 4.1 and the similar figure for working class housefuls shown in Table 4.2. The data on the number of people in households, especially in relation to overcrowding, was presented in detail in Chapter 2.

How then, can these differences be explained? Are we forced to accept at face value that coalminer wives were simply more fertile than the rest of the working class population with whom they lived? Or, was the coalminer population so different in its structure that any comparison of details, like family size, between it and the rest of the working class

will always show it to be different. In order to examine these issues in greater depth, two different approaches to the evidence will be adopted: the problems of any structural abnormalities in the coalminer population aged 15 to 44 will be analysed; and the fertility of coalminer wives as it is reflected in the ratio of children living with wives aged 15 to 44 will be examined in detail. The Census of course, cannot reveal fertility since it does not show the total number of children born to any woman, but by analysing households with resident mothers and children, it may be possible to achieve something ressembling a fertility ratio.

(a) The Structure of the Married Population

The first part of this chapter has drawn attention to the importance of the structural imbalances in the coalminer population of Lower Gornal in 1851, and obviously any analysis and subsequent discussion of family and household sizes must take into account these imbalances. An overall imbalance in the proportion of married couples, between say the ages of 20 and 49, might produce a high mean family size simply because it is this group which are naturally most active in creating families. As has been seen earlier in the chapter, the proportion of the Lower Gornal coalminer population in the 20 to 49 age group is very similar to that of the population as a whole, while it is larger than the rest of the working class population in Lower Gornal. Moreover, it has also been shown that the coalminer population over the age of fifty was seriously under-represented, and thus a profile of the coalminer population in Lower Gornal in 1851 consists largely of children, young persons and family-creating adults. In these circumstances high mean family and household sizes would be expected.

If the analysis is now limited to just married people, some interesting features emerge in the Lower Gornal coalminer population in 1851. Table 4.3 below reconstructs the marital status of both the coalminer population and the sample of working class households and it clearly reveals the repercussions of the overall structural imbalance on marital status in Lower Gornal in 1851. The 25-29 age group of both married men and women is the largest single group of married people at 27.1% and 25.7% respectively. Even more interestingly, 80.5% of all the married women are in the 20-44 age group: the group from which it would be expected that the vast majority of babies would come since both legitimate and illegitimate births to girls under twenty and births to mothers over the age of forty-five form a very small proportion of the total number of children recorded in

coalminer households by the Census. Moreover, since only a relatively small proportion, about one-fifth, of married couples were over forty-five years of age, it can also be assumed that only a small proportion of children will have left their coalminer families: most children will still be resident with their parents. In other words while many of the coalminer families, especially in the younger age groups, were probably not yet completed, there would have been in 1851 very little leakage of older children leaving home to set up households of their own. These Lower Gornal coalminer households do then provide the social historian with a fairly comprehensive demographic cross section of one group of the working class in the 19th century.

Table 4.3 Marital Status by Age of Coalminer and other Working-Class Households: Lower Gornal 1851

	Coalminer Households						Working Class Households					
	Male			Female			Male			Female		
Age Groups	M % of category	S % of category	W % of category	M % of category	S % of category	W % of category	M % of category	S % of category	W % of category	M % of category	S % of category	W % of category
0-14	0.0	74.1	0.0	0.0	83.2	0.0	0.0	71.0	0.0	0.0	75.8	0.0
15-19	0.4	15.3	0.0	0.9	8.8	0.0	0.4	16.0	0.0	0.9	13.9	0.0
20-24	9.6	5.8	0.0	15.9	5.3	0.0	11.0	8.7	0.0	16.7	4.5	0.0
25-29	27.1	3.4	0.0	25.6	1.3	0.0	14.8	1.9	0.0	11.2	1.8	8.3
30-34	16.2	0.5	0.0	18.1	1.3	0.0	11.9	1.2	9.1	17.2	1.3	13.9
35-39	17.9	0.0	16.7	12.3	0.0	0.0	17.4	0.2	18.2	15.9	0.7	2.8
40-44	8.3	0.3	33.3	8.4	0.0	33.3	11.9	0.5	0.0	11.2	0.4	13.9
Over 45	20.6	0.5	50.0	18.9	0.0	66.7	32.7	0.4	72.8	27.0	1.6	61.2
Totals	100.1	99.9	100.0	100.1	99.9	100.0	100.1	99.9	100.1	100.1	100.0	100.1

Source: Census Enumerators' Books 1851; Registration District Dudley; PRO Microfilm No. HO 1072030

Charts 4.3 and 4.4 below attempt to show the structural differences between the married coalminer and working class populations by superimposing the data for one on top of the other. The group of coalminer 25-29 year olds is much greater than the same group among the working class. In the working class households generally, a greater proportion of both the married men and women fall outside this fertile 20-44 age group with 32.7% of the men and 27.0% of the women being over forty-five. Again this reflects the more 'normal' structural composition of the working-class population as opposed to the coalminers in Lower Gornal. Many of these older working-class families in 1851 will already have lost those children who have left home to find work and who may be lodging with other families, and those children who have themselves married and set up their own households. These important structural differences must impinge on any discussion of comparative family and household sizes.

(b) Fertility as measured by the ratio of wives to surviving children

This analysis of family size can be taken further by comparing wives of childbearing age, between say 15 and 44 years of age, with the number of surviving children in their families recorded in the Census Enumerators' Books. This data is shown in Table 4.4 below for both coalminer wives and those married to men of other working class occupational groups generally. The figures are presented per 100 wives in each age group in order to make comparison easy. From the Table it appears that the coalminer wives had lower apparent fertility, as measured by the ratio of surviving children to wives, in all age groups except 30-34, and 40-44. The difference between the two groups of wives in the 20-24 age group is considerable, and this provides a partial explanation for the deflation of the overall apparent fertility of the coalminer wives.

Michael Haines, using the 1911 Census of Marriage and Fertility, calculated figures for the fertility of various occupational groups both for those families where wives were under 45 years of age, and for those where wives were of all ages. His figure for the *'fertility'* of coalminers' wives is 283 children actually surviving to every 100 couples where the wife was under 45 years of age at the time of the Census. (17) The figures show in Table 4.4 below can be compared with this, as long as it is remembered that they have been obtained in different ways.

Chart 4.3

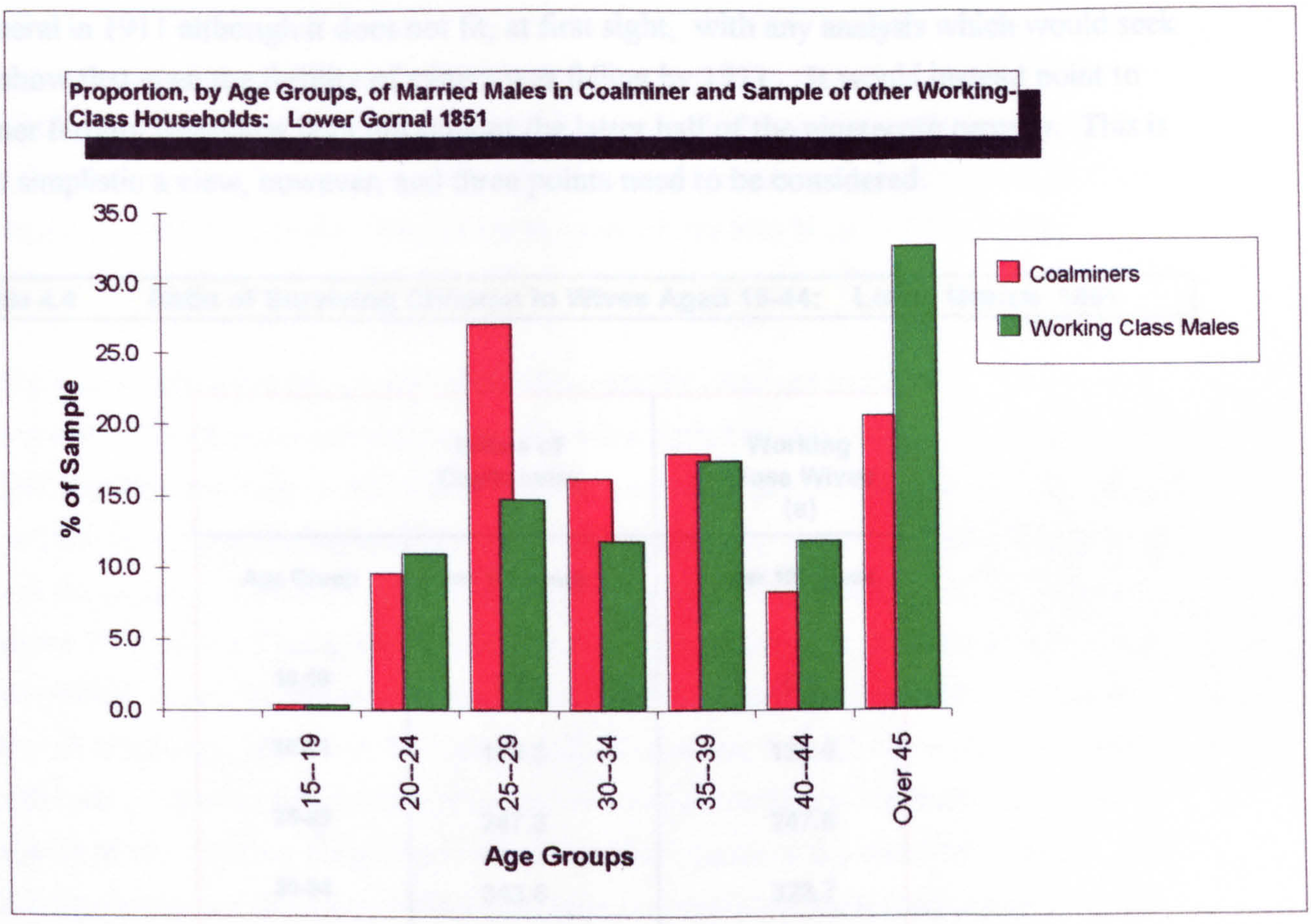
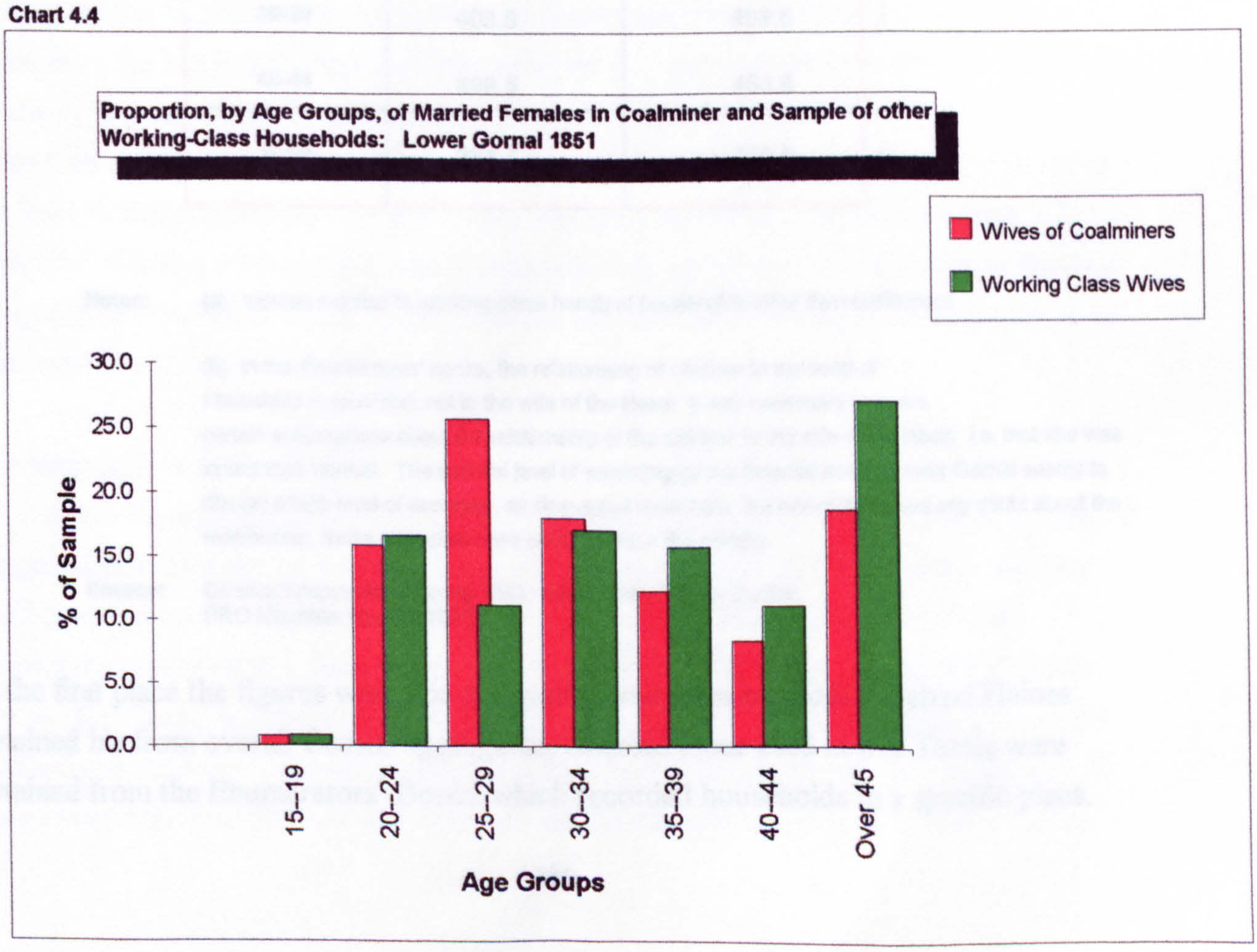


Chart 4.4



The figure shown below of 288.7 children surviving per 100 coalminer wives in Lower Gornal in 1851 shows a marked similarity with Michael Haines' figure for coalminers in general in 1911 although it does not fit, at first sight, with any analysis which would seek to show that even the fertility of miners was falling by 1911. It would instead point to miner fertility remaining high throughout the latter half of the nineteenth century. This is too simplistic a view, however, and three points need to be considered.

Table 4.4 Ratio of Surviving Children to Wives Aged 15-44: Lower Gornal 1851

	Wives of Coalminers	Working Class Wives (a)
Age Group	per 100 wives	per 100 wives
15-19	0.0	0.0
20-24	116.2	138.9
25-29	247.3	247.8
30-34	343.6	323.7
35-39	403.8	408.6
40-44	489.5	453.8
15-44	**288.7**	**310.8**

Notes: (a) women married to working class heads of households other than coalminers

(b) In the Enumerators' books, the relationship of children to the head of Household is recorded, not to the wife of the Head. It was necessary to make certain assumptions about the relationship of the children to the wife of the Head, i.e. that she was in fact their mother. The general level of recording by the Enumerators in Lower Gornal seems to display a high level of accuracy, as discussed elsewhere, but where there was any doubt about the relationship, these examples were excluded from the sample.

Source: Census Enumerators' Books 1851; Registration District Dudley; PRO Microfilm No. HO 1072030

In the first place the figures were not obtained by the same methods: Michael Haines obtained his from overall Census aggregates, whereas those used in this Thesis were obtained from the Enumerators' Books which recorded households in a specific place.

Haines' figures for coalminers are an aggregate for all coalminers and there were important differences between the conditions prevalent in the coalfields which may have affected the demographic structure. The present writer is not, however, of the opinion that this necessarily invalidates any comparison made between the figures as long as caution is applied in any inferences which may ensue. Unfortunately, it has not been possible to make any comparison with other local mining settlements since neither Crofts, Billington nor Mills have any data on the number of children born to wives in the settlements which they investigated.

In the second place the figures make no allowance for changes in mortality between the two dates. If both infant and child mortality were higher in 1851 than 1911, then it would not be surprising to find similarities between the figures since that for 1851 would be artificially deflated because of the high level of mortality prevalent then. The evidence about the health of Lower Gornal in general in the mid-nineteenth century, presented in Chapter Two of this Thesis, would lend itself to this analysis, but the present writer has been unable, as yet, to find any evidence that there were any specific improvements by 1911. It would not, however, be unreasonable to assume that the coalminers of Lower Gornal were enjoying a reduction of mortality among infants and children which was common to the working class as a whole in the early years of the twentieth century. (18) Carol Dyehouse has shown that there was little correlation between infant mortality and wives working outside the home contrary to views put forward early this century. Moreover, she has found some evidence to show that there could indeed be a reduction in mortality in areas where wives could supplement fragile family incomes by working themselves. (19) If few wives of coalminers worked in 1851, thus making it impossible for them to supplement their budgets, this may have contributed to higher infant mortality. Finding evidence for such a supposition is, of course, virtually impossible, but the question of whether levels of employment had any effect on family demography is an issue which will be taken up later.

The third point which must be considered in comparing figures for 1851 with those for 1911 is that the age profile for wives aged 15-44 in Lower Gornal in 1851 was atypical of the population as a whole, with too large a proportion in the 25-29 age group and too small proportions in the older age groups. The abnormal age distribution of the coalminer population in Lower Gornal in 1851 has been discussed at length in Chapter two of this Thesis, but its importance in any discussion of family demography cannot be stressed too strongly. These younger wives, in the 25-29 age group, will probably not have completed their families and therefore the figures will be skewed, giving a lower

figure for the number of children alive to the age group 15-45 as a whole. Thus, if this ratio is being used to express apparent fertility, then this will also be lower for the age group as a whole.

The abnormal age profile of the coalminer wives is seen clearly in the comparison which can be made from Table 4.4 with working class wives generally. The working class wives appear to have more children born to them than the coalminer wives: 310.8 children compared to 288.7 per 100 wives. It would be completely wrong to infer from this that coalminer fertility was lower than the rest of the working class in Lower Gornal in 1851: the working class wives simply had a more normal age profile and thus there were far more completed or nearly completed families in the working class households

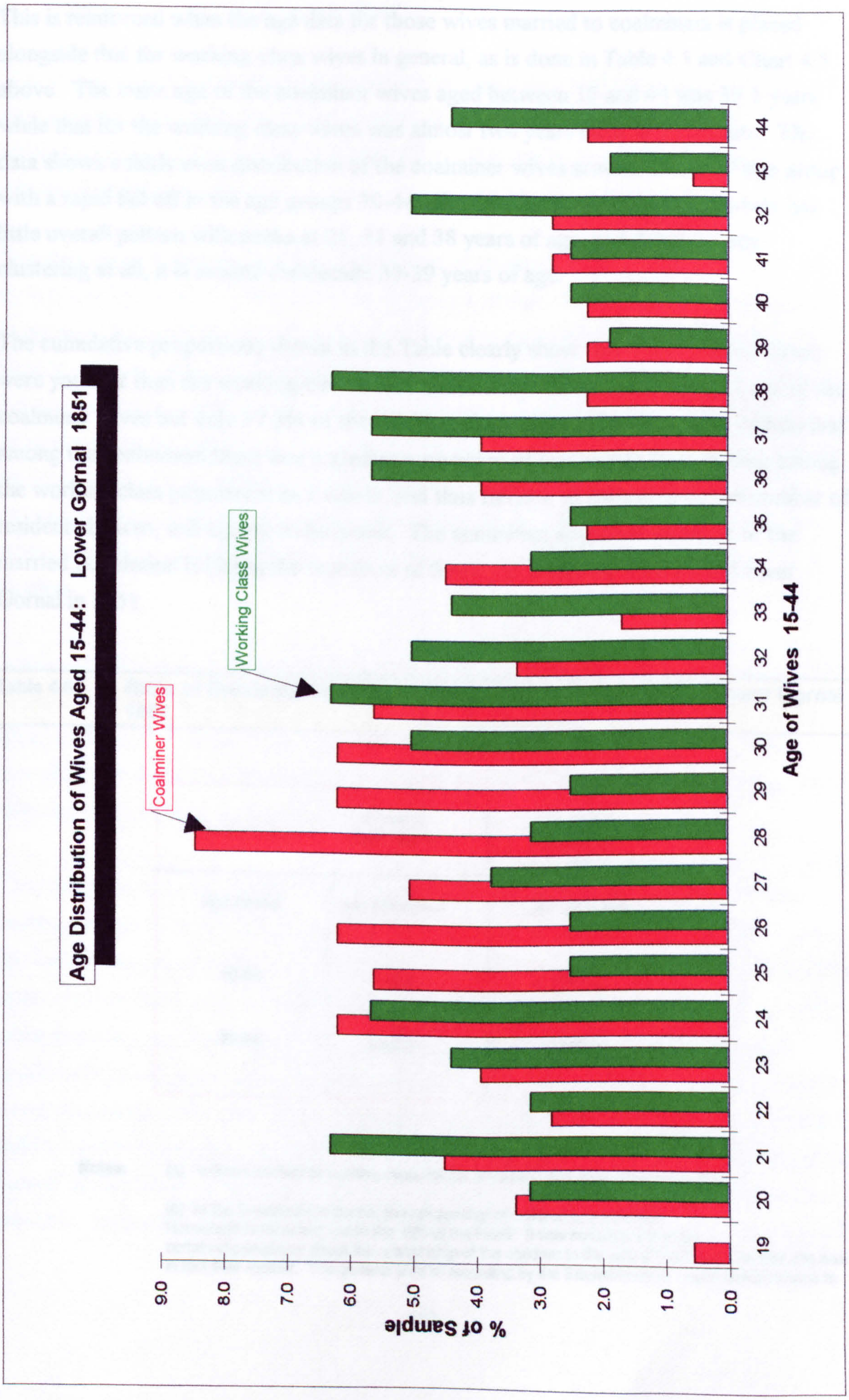
Table 4.5 Age Distribution of Wives 15-44: Lower Gornal 1851

Age Group	Coalminer Wives		Working Class Wives (a)	
	%	*cumulative %*	%	*cumulative %*
15-19	0.6	*0.6*	0.0	*0.0*
20-24	20.9	*21.5*	22.8	*22.8*
25-29	31.6	*53.1*	14.5	*37.3*
30-34	21.5	*74.6*	24.1	*61.4*
35-39	14.7	*89.3*	22.1	*83.5*
40-44	10.7	*100.0*	16.5	*100.0*
Totals	100.0		100.0	

Notes: (a) women married to working class heads of households other than coalminers

Source: Census Enumerators' Books 1851; Registration District Dudley; PRO Microfilm No. HO 1072030

Chart 4.5


Age Distribution of Wives Aged 15-44: Lower Gornal 1851
Coalminer Wives
Working Class Wives
% of Sample
9.0
8.0
7.0
6.0
5.0
4.0
3.0
2.0
1.0
0.0
Age of Wives 15-44
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
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36
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39
40
41
42
43
44

compared to the miners, and therefore more children.

This is reinforced when the age data for those wives married to coalminers is placed alongside that for working-class wives in general, as is done in Table 4.5 and Chart 4.5 above. The mean age of the coalminer wives aged between 15 and 44 was 30.1 years while that for the working class wives was almost two years older at 31.9 years. The data shows a fairly even distribution of the coalminer wives around the 25-29 age group with a rapid fall off in the age groups 30-44; the data for the working class wives has little overall pattern with peaks at 21, 31 and 38 years of age, and if there is any clustering at all, it is around the decade 30-39 years of age.

The cumulative proportions shown in the Table clearly show that the coalminer wives were younger than the working-class wives: those under thirty represented 53.1% of the coalminer wives but only 37.3% of the working-class wives. Thus it is fairly certain that among the coalminers there was a greater proportion of incomplete families than among the working class population as a whole, and thus fertility, as measured by the number of resident children, will appear to be lower. The somewhat abnormal structure of the married population is hiding the true level of fertility in coalminer families in Lower Gornal in 1851.

Table 4.6 **Ratio of Surviving Children to Wives Aged 15-29 and 30-44: Lower Gornal 1851**

	Wives of Coalminers	Working Class Wives (a)
Age Group	per 100 wives	per 100 wives
15-29	192.5	181.4
30-44	395.2	387.9

Notes: (a) women married to working class Heads of households other than coalminers

(b) In the Enumerators' books, the relationship of children to the head of Household is recorded, not to the wife of the Head. It was necessary to make certain assumptions about the relationship of the children to the wife of the Head, i.e. that she was in fact their mother. The general level of recording by the Enumerators in Lower Gornal seems to

display a high level of accuracy, as discussed elsewhere, but where there was any doubt about the relationship, these examples were excluded from the sample.

Source: Census Enumerators' Books 1851; Registration District Dudley; PRO Microfilm No. HO 1072030

This notion can be reinforced if the comparison with other working-class wives is made over a smaller age range, say 15 to 29 years of age; in other words, restricting the comparison to the more newly formed families. The results from this comparison are presented in Table 4.6 above.

This data shows quite clearly that if the effects of an atypical age profile are eliminated from the analysis, then coalminer wives do have a similar number of children alive and living with them as their working class counterparts, and this is the closest figure to a fertility rate that can be extracted from the Census Enumerators' Books. Indeed, the figures show that coalminer wives were slightly more fertile than their working class counterparts in the age group 15-29 and this fits more closely with the data about mean nuclear family size presented earlier in Tables 4.1 and 4.2 . The higher fertility of the younger coalminer wives more than counteracted the fact that the sample of coalminer wives as a whole lacked sufficient older wives who had nearly or fully completed their families.

Again, it is fairly safe to discount infant and child mortality as anything other than a fairly insignificant factor accounting for differences in size between coalminer families and other working class families in 1851. There is simply no reason to think that child mortality was significantly lower for working class families than it was for miners, thus allowing more of their children to survive.

Thus there seems to be at face value something of a paradox in that while coalminer nuclear families as a whole have a higher mean number of children than working-class families, in this important age group of childbearing wives aged 15-44, they actually have fewer children born to and resident with them than the working class wives. However, while mortality may have played a small part in causing this differential, it can more confidently be explained as the function of an abnormal age profile among the coalminer wives compared to the rest of the working class in Lower Gornal in 1851. The coalminer children were concentrated in younger families compared to the rest of the working class. Indeed. if the data presented in Table 4.6 above and the subsequent analysis are correct, it would be fairly safe to say that fertility amongst coalminer wives was higher than that of

other working class wives of a comparable age, and this is reflected in the respective sizes of their nuclear families.

Lower Gornal 1891: The Nuclear Family

The basic structure of coalminer and other working-class households in Lower Gornal in 1891 is presented in Tables 4.7 and 4.8 and Chart 4.6. As for 1851 the coalminer data is based on a total sample of all those resident in the enumeration district of Lower Gornal in 1851, whereas the data for the working class is based on a partial sample. The data shown in Table 4.7 shows a mean nuclear coalminer family size of 5.3 and a mean number of children per family of 3.3. If coalminer families are compared with other working class families then some quite startling differences emerge from the data, as shown in Table 4.8. The mean size of working class families excluding coalminers was 4.3, with a mean number of 2.5 children per family. These are significant differences of 1.0 and 0.8 persons repectively per family. The working class families have a greater proportion which are shown in the Census to have lost one of the parents, having only 1.8 adults on average per family. The reasons for these differences were discussed earlier while analysing the figures for Lower Gornal in 1851. Again, it would not give a very accurate picture of working-class family structure to have eliminated these single parent families from the sample since, given the levels of mortality then prevailing, this was a common feature of working-class life in the nineteenth century. Moreover, as the data above shows, it would seem that in 1891 the number of incomplete working-class nuclear families had increased slightly compared to 1851. Meaningful comparison can be made between coalminer and other working-class families as long as these differences resulting from the sampling methodology are allowed for in the ensuing discussion.

Thus this data, at face value, lends even more support than that for 1851 to the view that coalminers had large families and that they were larger than other groups of the working class. While the difference of an extra half person per coalminer family in 1851 could hardly be dismissed as statistically insignificant, this can certainly not be done for a difference of a whole person in 1891, and it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the coalminer population of Lower Gornal was displaying a somewhat different household demographic structure to the rest of the working class community. These differences can clearly be seen when the data is collated, as in Table 4.9 below.

Table 4.7 Structure of Coalminer Households by Size: Lower Gornal 1891

Size of Group	CHILDREN (a)		FAMILY (b)		HOUSEHOLD (c)		HOUSEFUL (d)	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
0	58	*12.1*	0	*0.0*	0	*0.0*	0	*0.0*
1	70	*14.6*	13	*2.7*	1	*0.2*	3	*0.6*
2	74	*15.4*	47	*9.8*	46	*9.4*	22	*4.7*
3	73	*15.2*	61	*12.7*	67	*13.7*	56	*12.0*
4	59	*12.3*	78	*16.3*	76	*15.5*	65	*13.9*
5	63	*13.2*	76	*15.9*	76	*15.5*	77	*16.5*
6	28	*5.8*	59	*12.3*	66	*13.5*	68	*14.6*
7	28	*5.8*	66	*13.8*	66	*13.5*	66	*14.2*
8	17	*3.5*	26	*5.4*	28	*5.7*	42	*9.0*
9	8	*1.7*	27	*5.6*	31	*6.3*	31	*6.7*
10	1	*0.2*	17	*3.5*	18	*3.7*	20	*4.3*
11	0	*0.0*	8	*1.7*	11	*2.2*	12	*2.6*
12	0	*0.0*	1	*0.2*	2	*0.4*	2	*0.4*
13	0	*0.0*	0	*0.0*	1	*0.2*	2	*0.4*
Totals	479	*100.0*	479	*100.0*	489	*100.0*	466	*100.0*
Total Persons	1570		2519		2677		2757	
Mean Size	**3.3**		**5.3**		**5.5**		**5.9**	

Notes: (a) children in coalminer nuclear families
(b) nuclear coalminer families consisting of parents and their children
(b) nuclear coalminer families plus any other kin sharing the house
(c) all persons sharing a house with a coalminer head

Source: Census Enumerators'Books; Registrar's District Dudley;
PRO Microfiche 12/2291 and 12/2292

Table 4.8 **Structure of Sample of Working-Class Households other than Coalminer by Size: Lower Gornal 1891**

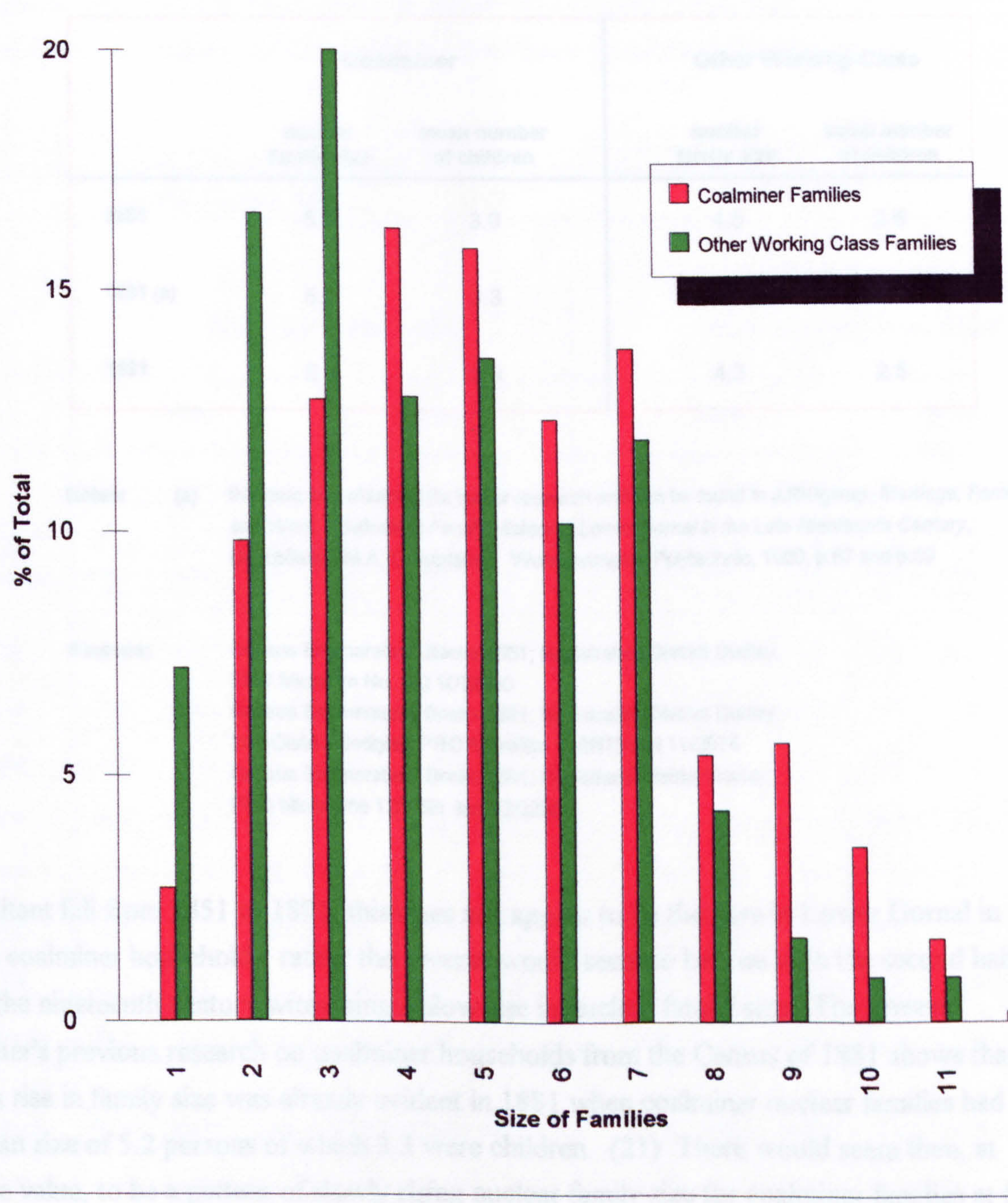
Size of Group	CHILDREN (a) N	CHILDREN (a) %	FAMILY (b) N	FAMILY (b) %	HOUSEHOLD (c) N	HOUSEHOLD (c) %	HOUSEFUL (d) N	HOUSEFUL (d) %
0	49	*20.9*	0	*0.0*	0	*0.0*	0	*0.0*
1	50	*21.3*	17	*7.2*	6	*2.8*	5	*2.4*
2	32	*13.6*	39	*16.6*	26	*11.9*	19	*9.0*
3	31	*13.2*	47	*20.0*	37	*17.0*	32	*15.1*
4	28	*11.9*	30	*12.8*	34	*15.6*	32	*15.1*
5	27	*11.5*	32	*13.6*	34	*15.6*	38	*17.9*
6	10	*4.3*	24	*10.2*	32	*14.7*	32	*15.1*
7	4	*1.7*	28	*11.9*	26	*11.9*	24	*11.3*
8	2	*0.9*	10	*4.3*	12	*5.5*	17	*8.0*
9	2	*0.9*	4	*1.7*	5	*2.3*	6	*2.8*
10	0	*0.0*	2	*0.9*	4	*1.8*	5	*2.4*
11	0	*0.0*	2	*0.9*	2	*0.9*	2	*0.9*
Totals	235	*100.0*	235	*100.0*	218	*100.0*	212	*100.0*
Total Persons	576		1014		1052		1079	
Mean Size	**2.5**		**4.3**		**4.8**		**5.1**	

Notes: (a) children in working class nuclear families
(b) nuclear working class families consisting of parents and their children
(c) nuclear working class families plus any other kin sharing the house
(d) all persons sharing a house with a working class head

Source: Census Enumerators'Books 1851; Registrar's District Dudley;
PRO Microfiche 12/2291 and 12/2292

Chart 4.6

Relative Sizes of Coalminer and other Working-Class Nuclear Families: Lower Gornal 1891



Moreover, this figure of 5.3 persons per nuclear coalminer family is actually higher than the total number of inhabitants per house in the Black Country in 1891, calculated at 5.1 by George Barnsby. (20) While Barnsby's figures for inhabitants per house show a

Table 4.9 **Nuclear Family Size in Coalminer and other Working Class-Households: Lower Gornal 1851 and 1891**

	Coalminer		Other Working-Class	
	nuclear family size	mean number of children	nuclear family size	mean number of children
1851	5.0	3.0	4.5	2.6
1881 (a)	5.2	3.3	4.4	2.7
1891	5.3	3.3	4.3	2.5

Notes: (a) this data was obtained for earlier research and can be found in **J.Ridgway**, *Marriage, Family and Work: Coalmining Family History in Lower Gornal in the Late Nineteenth Century*, Unpublished M.A. Dissertation, Wolverhampton Polytechnic, 1989, p.67 and p.69

Sources: Census Enumerators' Books 1851; Registration District Dudley; PRO Microfilm No. HO 1072030
Census Enumerators' Books 1881; Registration District Dudley; Sub-District Sedgley; PRO Microfilm 11/2873 and 11/2874
Census Enumerators' Books 1891; Registrar's District Dudley; PRO Microfiche 12/2291 and 12/2292

hesitant fall from 1851 to 1891, this does not appear to be the case in Lower Gornal in the coalminer households: rather the reverse would seem to be true with the second half of the nineteenth century witnessing a slow rise in nuclear family size. The present writer's previous research on coalminer households from the Census of 1881 shows that this rise in family size was already evident in 1881 when coalminer nuclear families had a mean size of 5.2 persons of which 3.3 were children. (21) There would seem then, at face value, to be a pattern of slowly rising nuclear family size for coalminer families at the same time as a slowly falling nuclear family size for other working class families in Lower Gornal in the second half of the nineteenth century. There is at present no other data

available for other coalminer settlements in the Black Country or the Midlands region with which to make comparison at the end of the nineteenth century.

(a) The structure of the married population

However, to what extent is this significant difference in family size a result of any structural imbalances in the married coalminer population? Table 4.10 below reconstructs the marital status of both the coalminer population and the sample of

Table 4.10 Marital Status by Age of Coalminer and other Working-Class Households: Lower Gornal 1891

	Coalminer Households						Working-Class Households					
	Male			Female			Male			Female		
Age Groups	M % of category	S % of category	W % of category	M %of category	S % of category	W % of category	M % of category	S % of category	W % of category	M % of category	S % of category	W % of category
0-14	0.0	70.5	0.0	0.0	76.7	0.0	0.0	69.5	0.0	0.0	68.0	0.0
15-19	0.0	17.8	0.0	1.3	15.0	3.0	0.0	15.5	0.0	0.5	17.6	0.0
20-24	10.0	7.3	0.0	13.0	5.5	3.0	5.5	8.8	7.7	8.5	7.2	0.0
25-29	15.9	2.3	0.0	16.7	1.3	3.0	16.0	2.4	7.7	19.1	2.0	0.0
30-34	15.3	1.2	4.0	13.4	0.6	0.0	12.5	1.2	7.7	11.1	2.6	3.0
35-39	15.5	0.2	4.0	15.3	0.1	0.0	14.0	0.9	0.0	14.6	0.0	6.0
40-44	12.6	0.1	12.0	13.4	0.0	0.0	13.5	0.0	0.0	9.5	1.6	6.0
Over 45	30.7	0.5	76.0	26.9	0.8	91.5	38.5	1.5	76.9	36.7	0.9	84.6
Totals	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	99.0	100.0	99.8	100.0	100.0	99.9	99.6

Source: Census Enumerators' Books 1891; Registrar's District Dudley; PRO Microfiche 12/2291 and 12/2292

working-class households and it clearly reveals that the coalminer married population, both male and female, is more evenly spread amongst the 15 to 44 age group, with no imbalances caused by overweighting in particular age groups.

No single age group stands out as containing a disproportion of the married population as was evident with the married population of Lower Gornal in 1851, in which the 25-29 age group was far too large and which led to the skewing of the data. (22) While in 1851 the 20-44 age group contained 80.5% of the coalminer wives, in 1891 this figure has fallen to 71.8%, and it is this group from which would come the vast majority of births since again both legitimate and illegitimate births to girls under twenty and to mothers over 45 formed a very small proportion of the total number of children recorded in the Census. Thus it can be said that the coalminer married population in 1891 had a fairly normal distribution, and therefore formed a fairly representative cross-section of families: some were yet to be completed; some were complete families to which there would be no further additions; and some were families from which children had already left home.

Moreover, the coalminer married population now shows a very similar age distribution to that of the working class population of Lower Gornal in 1891. This can be seen in Chart 4.7 below in which the data for the married coalminers and their wives and that for the working class sample of husbands and wives has been extracted from Table 4.10 and combined to produce the chart. There are fewer working class males and females in the 20-24 age group, reflecting perhaps later marriage, and there are more in the over 45 age group, reflecting the fact that the coalminer population was essentially a young one even in 1891. In the all-important 25-44 age group, the group from which most children would be produced, the similarities in composition can clearly be seen. Thus it makes it even more remarkable that this coalminer population could produce families larger on average than the rest of the working class population.

(b) Fertility as measured by the ratio of wives to surviving children

This analysis of family size can be taken further, as was done with the data for 1851, by comparing wives of childbearing age between the age of 15 and 44 years, with the number of children shown alive in their families in the 1891 Census, in order to obtain a rough index of fertility. This comparison is shown in Table 4.11 below for both wives of coalminers and those married to men of other working class occupational groups. In all

Chart 4.7

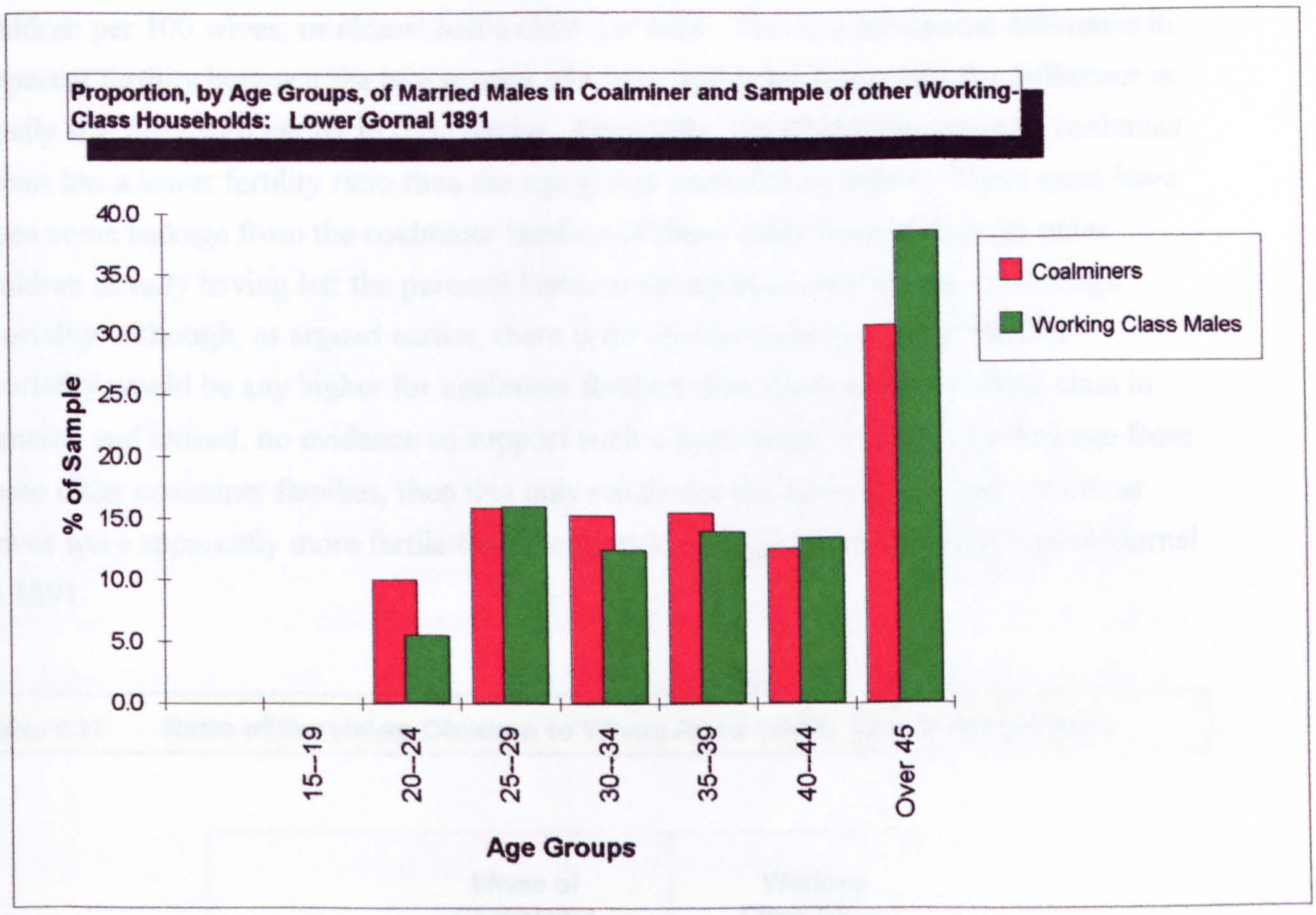
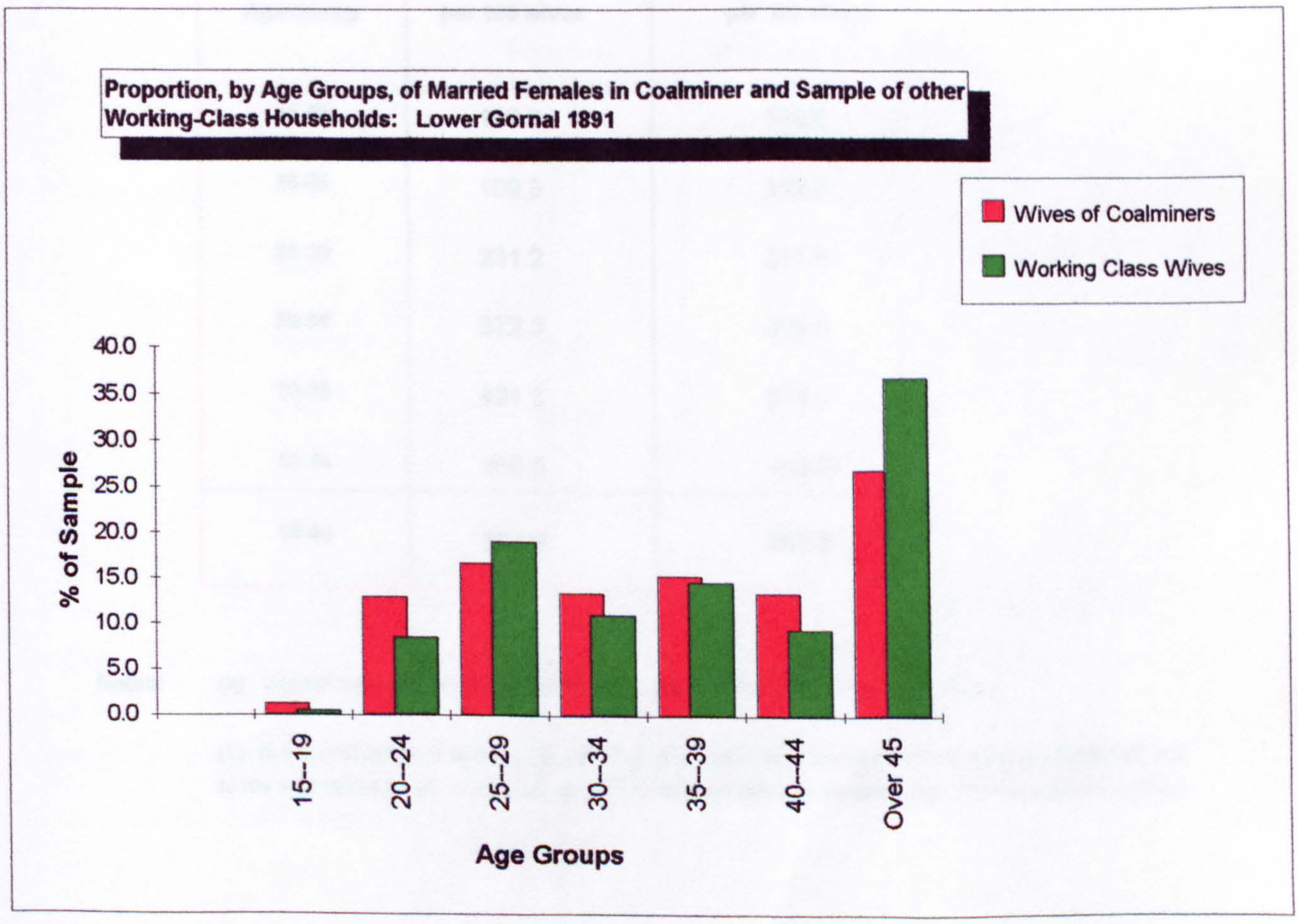


Chart 4.8



the age groups above 20-24 the coalminer wives have a greater apparent fertility than their working class counterparts, and overall for the age group 15-44, a difference of 49.7 children per 100 wives, or almost half a child per wife. This is a substantial difference in apparent fertility between the two groups of wives, and helps to explain the difference in family size discussed earlier in this chapter. Unusually, the 40-44 age group of coalminer wives has a lower fertility ratio than the age group immediately below. There must have been some leakage from the coalminer families of these older women through older children already having left the parental home to set up their own homes, or through mortality: although, as argued earlier, there is no obvious reason to suppose that mortality would be any higher for coalminer families than those of the working class in general, and indeed, no evidence to support such a hypothesis. If there was leakage from these older coalminer families, then this only reinforces the observation that coalminer wives were apparently more fertile than their working class counterparts in Lower Gornal in 1891.

Table 4.11 Ratio of Surviving Children to Wives Aged 15-44: Lower Gornal 1891

	Wives of Coalminers	Working Class Wives (a)
Age Group	per 100 wives	per 100 wives
15-19	100.0	100.0
20-24	109.3	112.5
25-29	231.2	211.8
30-34	372.3	309.5
35-39	491.3	374.1
40-44	450.8	430.0
15-44	**337.9**	**288.2**

Notes: (a) women married to working class heads of households other than coalminers

(b) In the Enumerators' books, the relationship of children to the head of Household is recorded, not to the wife of the Head. It was necessary to make certain assumptions about the relationship of the

children to the wife of the Head, I.e. that she was in fact their mother. The general level of recording by the Enumerators in Lower Gornal seems to display a high level of accuracy, as discussed elsewhere, but where there was any doubt about the relationship, these examples were excluded from the sample.

Source: Census Enumerators' Books 1891; Registrar's District Dudley; PRO Microfiche 12/2291 and 12/2292

The figure presented above of 337.9 children surviving for every 100 miners' wives at the time of the Census is considerably higher than Michael Haines' figure of 283 children per 100 in 1911. This adds further support to the notion presented earlier that the coalminers in Lower Gornal did not conform to the general demographic pattern in the late nineteenth century in which a slowly falling ratio of children to wives would be expected. Instead, if the present analysis is correct, the ratio of children to wives remained high after 1851 and may have only begun to fall after 1881. Moreover, while the ratio was higher for miners' wives than it was for other working class wives, they too maintained a high ratio until 1881, after which their ratio also began to fall. This pattern is shown in Table 4.12 below which combines the data for 1851 and 1891.

Table 4.12 Ratio of Surviving Children to Wives Aged 15-44: Lower Gornal 1851-1891

	Wives of Coalminers	Working Class Wives (a)
	per 100 wives aged 15-44	per 100 wives aged 15-44
1851	288.7	310.8
1881 (b)	351.7	315.2
1891	337.9	288.2

Notes: (a) women married to working class Heads of households other than coalminers
(b) this data was obtained for earlier research and can be found in **J.Ridgway**, *Marriage, Family and Work: Coalmining Family History in Lower Gornal in the Late Nineteenth Century*, Unpublished M.A. Dissertation, Wolverhampton Polytechnic, 1989, p.65

Source: Census Enumerators' Books 1851; Registration District Dudley; PRO Microfilm No. HO 1072030
Census Enumerators' Books 1881; Registration District Dudley; Sub-District Sedgley; PRO Microfilm 11/2873 and 11/2874
Census Enumerators' Books 1891; Registrar's District Dudley; PRO Microfiche 12/2291 and 12/2292

The notion that fertility remained high for coalminer wives after 1851 is reinforced by categorising the age group data into what could be called a young group and an older group of wives: 15-29 and 30-44 respectively. This is done in Table 4.13 below and it highlights both an important similarity and an important difference between the two groups of wives in 1891. In the younger age group of wives there was little difference in apparent fertility betweeen the coalminer wives and their working class counterparts, although interestingly the figures are lower than those for 1851. (23) Again, it would seem likely that this is partly a result of the normalising of the age distribution of the coalminer population to reflect more closely that of the working class population in general. If differences in mortality were a significant factor here, then surely a rise in the number of children surviving and resident, reflecting a fall in mortality, would be expected in 1891 compared to 1851, rather than a fall in the number of children. This assumes of course that there was an improvement in levels of child care between 1851 and 1891, resulting, perhaps, from the improvements in working class standards of living in the late nineteenth century.

Table 4.13 **Ratio of Surviving Children to Wives Aged 15-29 and 30-44: Lower Gornal 1891**

	Wives of Coalminers	Working Class Wives (a)
Age Group	per 100 wives	per 100 wives
15-29	179.7	178.4
30-44	439.1	370.6

Notes: (a) women married to working class Heads of households other than coalminers

(b) In the Enumerators' books, the relationship of children to the head of Household is recorded, not to the wife of the Head. It was necessary to make certain assumptions about the relationship of the children to the wife of the Head, I.e. that she was in fact their mother. The general level of recording by the Enumerators in Lower Gornal seems to isplay a high level of accuracy, as discussed elsewhere, but where there was any doubt about the relationship, these examples were excluded from the sample.

Source: Census Enumerators' Books 1891; Registrar's District Dudley; PRO Microfiche 12/2291 and 12/2292

However, there is an important difference between the two groups of wives in the older age group over 30. The coalminer wives have maintained their high fertility in this older age group, and the figure of 439.1 children per 100 wives would have been even higher had there not been some leakage of children from families, as was noted earlier. The working class wives in general, however, have a lower apparent fertility of 370.6 per 100 wives: this is a difference of 68.5 per 100 or 0.69 of a child per wife in this age group.

Moreover, this pattern of fertility is somewhat different to that which was evident in 1851 for the group of older wives, as can be seen in Table 4.14 below which combines the data of 1851 and 1891 for the two age groups of wives, 15-29 and 30-44. Whereas the working class wives in general have reduced their apparent fertility by 1891, the

Table 4.14 Ratio of Surviving Children to Wives Aged 15-29 and 30-44: Lower Gornal 1851 and 1891

	Wives of Coalminers		Working Class Wives (a)	
Age Group	1851 per 100 wives	1891 per 100 wives	1851 per 100 wives	1891 per 100 wives
15-29	192.5	179.7	181.4	178.4
30-44	395.2	439.1	387.9	370.6

Notes: (a) women married to working class Heads of households other than coalminers

Sources: Census Enumerators' Books 1851; Registration District Dudley; PRO Microfilm No. HO 1072030
Census Enumerators' Books 1891; Registrar's District Dudley; PRO Microfiche 12/2291 and 12/2292

coalminer wives have continued to maintain a high level. Thus while there may have been some normalising of certain features of coalminer demography in line with the rest of the working class by 1891, they do still display distinctly different characteristics in other aspects of their demography. This higher fertility maintained after 1851 among the older coalminer wives helps to explain the higher family size in 1891. Again, it would seem reasonable to dismiss mortality as a significant causal factor explaining the differences

between the coalminer wives and their working class counterparts since there is no reason, at first sight, why infant and child mortality levels should have been different for the two groups of households: low in coalminer households, but high in working class households generally.

Constant reference has been made in this Chapter to the importance of age distribution to overall family structure. The question therefore remains to be asked of the data for 1891: is the high number of children surviving to the coalminer wives aged 15-44 as a whole, and particularly to the older age group of 30-44, the result of an abnormal age distribution of wives in Lower Gornal in 1891, just as the artificially low figure obtained for 1851 was? The evidence presented so far would seem to dispel this notion and this is reinforced by the data presented below in Table 4.15 and Chart 4.9, which shows the age distribution data for coalminer and other working class wives in Lower Gornal in 1891. There is a fairly regular distribution of both the coalminer and working class wives generally around the 25-29 age group. With the single exception of the abnormally low number of 32 years old wives there are no aberrations in the data and therefore no significant skewing of the data resulting from abnormal clustering in any particular age groups. It is interesting to note that the abnormally low proportion of 32 year old coalminer wives is also repeated amongst the working class wives. Thus it would seem that the data showing the ratio of surviving children to wives aged 15 to 44 originates from a married population with a reasonably *'normal'* profile and can therefore be regarded as an accurate picture of fertility, if it is accepted that comparing surviving children with wives alive at a point in time does reflect fertility. Moreover, the age distribution of the coalminer wives does show quite close similarities with that for the working class wives as a whole with clustering in the early twenties and late thirties, with the abnormal dip in the early thirties common to both. This can be seen clearly on Chart 4.9 where the distribution data is superimposed. Indeed, with a few exceptions, it could almost be said that the coalminer married population in 1891, at least in its age profile, now reflects the working class population as a whole and no longer stands out as displaying significantly different demographic characteristics.

Chart 4.9

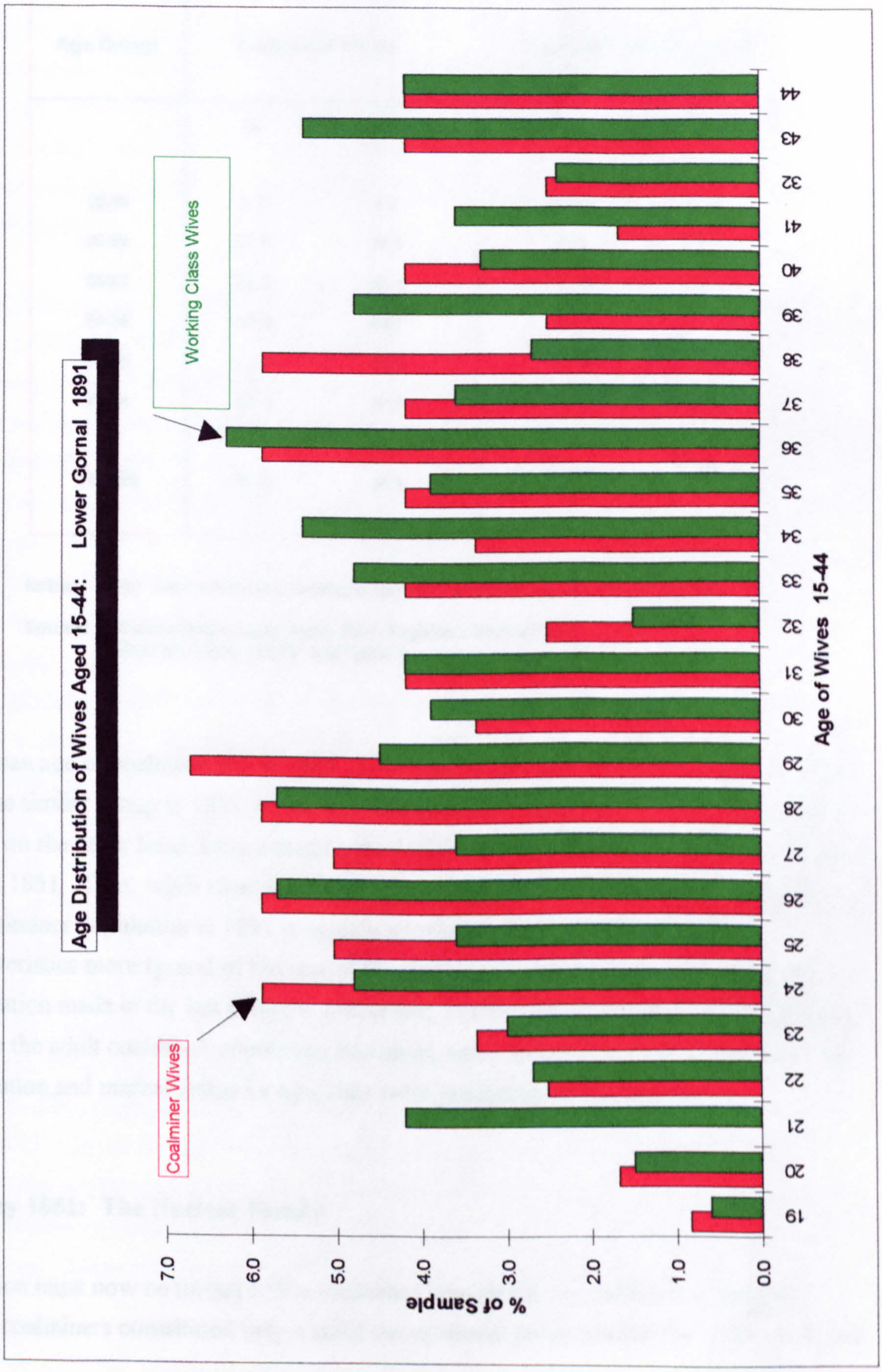

Age Distribution of Wives Aged 15-44: Lower Gornal 1891
Working Class Wives
Coalminer Wives
% of Sample
7.0
6.0
5.0
4.0
3.0
2.0
1.0
0.0
Age of Wives 15-44
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
32
43
44

Table 4.15 Age Distribution of Wives 15-44: Lower Gornal 1891

Age Group	Coalminer Wives		Working Class Wives (a)	
	%	*cumulative %*	%	*cumulative %*
15-19	1.7	*1.7*	0.8	*0.8*
20-24	17.8	*19.5*	13.5	*14.3*
25-29	22.9	*42.4*	30.2	*44.5*
30-34	18.3	*60.7*	17.5	*62.0*
35-39	20.9	*81.6*	23.0	*85.0*
40-44	18.3	*99.9*	15.1	*100.1*
Totals	99.9	*99.9*	100.1	*100.1*

Notes: (a) women married to working class heads of households other than coalminers

Source: Census Enumerators' Books 1891; Registrar's District Dudley; PRO Microfiche 12/2291 and 12/2292

The mean age of coalminer wives aged 15-44 was 32.2 in 1891: this was 2.1 years older than the similar group in 1851 which was dominated by young wives. The working class wives, on the other hand, have a mean age of 32.1 in 1891 which is only 0.3 years higher than in 1851. Thus, while there has been little change in the working class population, the coalminer population in 1891 is again beginning to display demographic characteristics more typical of the rest of the working class than it was doing in 1851, an observation made in the last Chapter concerning its overall age structure. (24) And yet, despite the adult coalminer population becoming more *'normal'* by 1891, in terms of age distribution and marital status by age, they were producing more children.

Cradley 1851: The Nuclear Family

Attention must now be turned to the coalminer households in Cradley, a community where coalminers constituted only a small occupational group among the many metal and

blacksmithing occupations found there. The purpose of this is to determine whether the distinctive characteristics of coalminer demography, and in particular the size and composition of their households, was a function of their particular occupation irrespective of the type of community in which they lived, or whether other factors influenced their demography when they formed only a small part of a working class community. It might be expected that where the coalminers as an ocupational group formed a substantial proportion of the community they might exercise considerable influence over the formation of those cultural norms which determined household and family formation.

The basic structure of the coalminer and other working class households in Cradley in 1851 is presented in Tables 4.16, 4.17 and Chart 4.10. The data in Table 4.16 shows a mean nuclear family size of 4.4 and a mean number of children per family of 2.4. These figures are lower than those for Lower Gornal in 1851, which had a coalminer nuclear family size of 5.0 with 3.0 children per family. Moreover, these figures for coalminers in Cradley are lower than those for the other settlements of the Midlands discussed earlier in the chapter. However, while in Lower Gornal there was a substantial difference between the coalminer families and those of the rest of the working class, in Cradley the two groups are very similar in their family size, with figures for the working class of 4.4 persons and 2.6 children per family. The size of the working-class families in Cradley in 1851 was almost identical to those of Lower Gornal in 1851 with a mean family size of 4.5 and a mean of 2.6 children per family. One difference which can be seen, however, between the coalminer families and those of the working class in general is the number of parents per nuclear family. In both Lower Gornal and Cradley in 1851 in the coalminer families on average both parents have survived, whereas among the working class families, generally, a larger proportion of them have lost one of the parents. Among the working class families of Lower Gornal and Cradley respectively there were only 1.9 and 1.8 parents in each nuclear family on average. There were no coalminer heads who were widowers and the importance of the coalminer wife to the well-being of the family was discussed earlier: thus these families almost always had two parents. The sampling of the working class population obviously included some widows, and these incomplete families have led to the very slightly depressed figures for family size. Meaningful comparison can be made between coalminer and other working class families as long as these differences resulting from the sampling methodology is allowed for in the ensuing discussion. These differences can be seen clearly when tabulated as in Table 4.18 below.

Table 4.16 Structure of Coalminer Households by Size: Cradley 1851

Size of Group	CHILDREN (a)			FAMILY (b)			HOUSEHOLD (c)			HOUSEFUL (d)		
	N	%	Total People	N	%	Total People	N	%	Total People	N	%	Total People
0	4	*20.0*	0	0	*0.0*	0	0	*0.0*	0	0	*0.0*	0
1	4	*20.0*	4	0	*0.0*	0	0	*0.0*	0	0	*0.0*	0
2	4	*20.0*	8	4	*20.0*	8	3	*15.0*	6	2	*10.0*	4
3	1	*5.0*	3	4	*20.0*	12	3	*15.0*	9	3	*15.0*	9
4	4	*20.0*	16	4	*20.0*	16	6	*30.0*	24	6	*30.0*	24
5	2	*10.0*	10	1	*5.0*	5	1	*5.0*	5	2	*10.0*	10
6	1	*5.0*	6	4	*20.0*	24	2	*10.0*	12	1	*5.0*	6
7	0	*0.0*	0	2	*10.0*	14	2	*10.0*	14	3	*15.0*	21
8	0	*0.0*	0	1	*5.0*	8	3	*15.0*	24	3	*15.0*	24
Totals	20	*100.0*	47	20	*100.0*	87	20	*100.0*	94	20	*100.0*	98
Mean Size			**2.4**			**4.4**			**4.7**			**4.9**

Notes:
(a) children in coalminer nuclear families
(b) nuclear coalminer families of parents and their children
(c) nuclear coalminer families plus any other kin sharing the house
(d) all persons sharing a house with a coalminer head of house

Source: Census Enumerators' Books 1851; Registrar's District Halesowen; PRO Microfilm No. 1072034

Table 4.17 **Structure of Sample of Working-Class Households other than Coalminers by Size: Cradley 1851**

Size of Group	CHILDREN (a)			FAMILY (b)			HOUSEHOLD (c)			HOUSEFUL (d)		
	N	%	Total People	N	%	Total People	N	%	Total People	N	%	Total People
0	26	*20.5*	0	0	*0.0*	0	0	*0.0*	0	0	*0.0*	0
1	23	*18.1*	23	4	*3.1*	4	1	*0.8*	1	0	*0.0*	0
2	19	*15.0*	38	29	*22.8*	58	23	*19.0*	46	24	*19.8*	48
3	17	*13.4*	51	21	*16.5*	63	18	*14.9*	54	12	*9.9*	36
4	19	*15.0*	76	17	*13.4*	68	16	*13.2*	64	18	*14.9*	72
5	9	*7.1*	45	15	*11.8*	75	16	*13.2*	80	15	*12.4*	75
6	5	*3.9*	30	18	*14.2*	108	19	*15.7*	114	19	*15.7*	114
7	7	*5.5*	49	10	*7.9*	70	12	*9.9*	84	13	*10.7*	91
8	1	*0.8*	8	4	*3.1*	32	5	*4.1*	40	6	*5.0*	48
9	1	*0.8*	9	7	*5.5*	63	7	*5.8*	63	8	*6.6*	72
10	0	*0.0*	0	1	*0.8*	10	3	*2.5*	30	3	*2.5*	30
11	0	*0.0*	0	1	*0.8*	11	1	*0.8*	11	3	*2.5*	33
Totals	127	*100.0*	329	127	*100.0*	562	121	*100.0*	587	121	*100.0*	619
Mean Size			**2.6**			**4.4**			**4.9**			**5.1**

Notes:
(a) children in working class nuclear families
(b) nuclear working class families consisting of parents and their children
(c) nuclear working class families plus any other kin sharing the house
(d) all persons sharing a house with a working class head

Source:
Census Enumerators'Books 1851; Registrar's District Halesowen;
PRO Microfilm No. HO 1072034

Chart 4.10

Relative Sizes of Coalminer and other Working-Class Nuclear Families: Cradley 1851

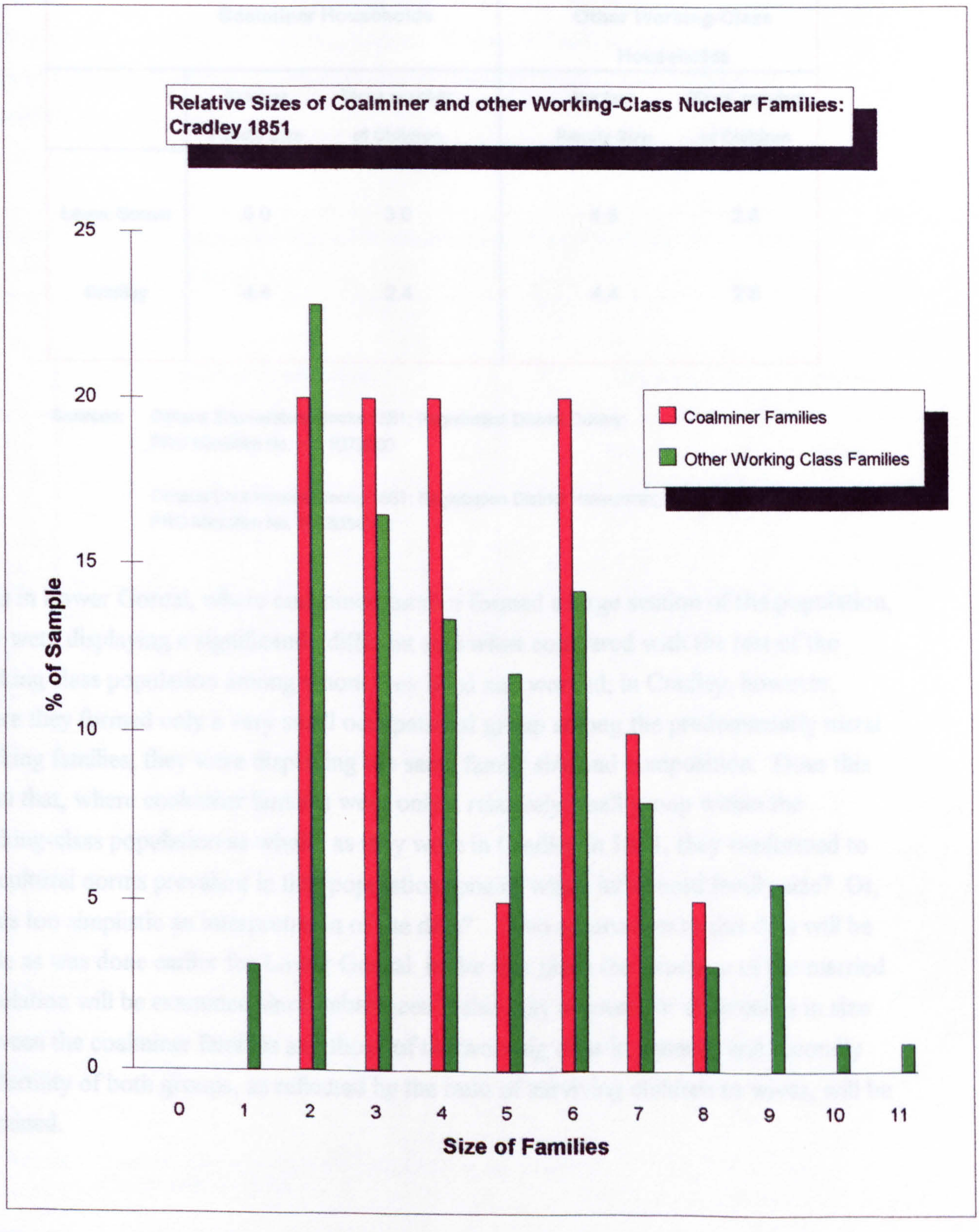


Table 4.18 Nuclear Family Size in Lower Gornal and Cradley in 1851

	Coalminer Households		Other Working-Class Households	
	Nuclear Family Size	Mean number of Children	Nuclear Family Size	Mean number of Children
Lower Gornal	5.0	3.0	4.5	2.6
Cradley	4.4	2.4	4.4	2.6

Sources: Census Enumerators' Books 1851; Registration District Dudley; PRO Microfilm No. HO 1072030

Census Enumerators' Books 1851; Registration District Halesowen; PRO Microfilm No. 1072034

Thus in Lower Gornal, where coalminer families formed a large section of the population, they were displaying a significantly different size when compared with the rest of the working class population among whom they lived and worked; in Cradley, however, where they formed only a very small occupational group among the predominantly metal working families, they were displaying the same family size and composition. Does this mean that, where coalminer families were only a relatively small group within the working-class population as whole, as they were in Cradley in 1851, they conformed to the cultural norms prevalent in that population, one of which influenced family size? Or, is this too simplistic an interpretation of the data? Two approaches to this data will be made as was done earlier for Lower Gornal: in the first place the structure of the married population will be examined since imbalances in this may account for differences in size between the coalminer families and those of the working class in general; and secondly the fertility of both groups, as reflected by the ratio of surviving children to wives, will be examined.

(a) The Structure of the Married Population

The analysis of Lower Gornal in 1851, presented earlier in this chapter, drew attention to the abnormal structure of the married population aged between 20 and 49 which may

have been partly responsible for the differences in family size between the coalminers and the working class generally. Can the lack of difference in family size between the two groups in Cradley be at least partly attributable to a more *'normal'* structure among the 20-49 year old's in the coalminer population. Table 4.19 below recontructs the marital status of both the coalminer population and the sample taken of the working class households.

Table 4.19 Maritial Status by Age of Coalminer and other Working-Class Households: Cradley 1851

	Coalminer Households						Working Class Households					
	Male			Female			Male			Female		
Age Groups	M % of category	S % of category	W % of category	M %of category	S % of category	W % of category	M % of category	S % of category	W % of category	M % of category	S % of category	W % of category
0-14	0.0	75.0	0.0	0.0	79.2	0.0	0.0	65.7	0.0	0.0	71.8	0.0
15-19	0.0	12.5	0.0	5.0	16.7	0.0	0.0	15.5	0.0	0.9	18.4	0.0
20-24	23.8	6.3	0.0	20.0	4.2	0.0	14.4	9.7	0.0	14.5	5.2	0.0
25-29	19.0	3.1	0.0	25.0	0.0	0.0	14.4	3.4	12.5	19.1	1.1	0.0
30-34	19.0	0.0	0.0	10.0	0.0	0.0	13.5	1.4	12.5	20.0	0.6	0.0
35-39	9.5	0.0	0.0	25.0	0.0	0.0	16.2	1.0	0.0	9.1	0.6	0.0
40-44	14.3	0.0	0.0	10.0	0.0	0.0	12.6	1.4	25.0	10.0	1.1	11.1
Over 45	14.3	3.1	100.0	5.0	0.0	0.0	28.8	2.0	50.0	26.4	1.1	88.9
Totals	99.9	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.1	0.0	99.9	100.1	100.0	100.0	99.9	100.0

Source: Census Enumerators' Books 1851; Registration District Halesowen; PRO Microfilm No. 10720

If the married women are examined, it can be seen that 90.0% of them fall within the age group 20-44, the group from which it would be expected that the vast majority of babies

would come since both legitimate and illegitimate births to girls under twenty, and births to mothers over the age of 45, form a very small proportion of the total number of children recorded in coalminer households in the Census. Thus the profile of the coalminer wives shows families where there would have been little leakage of older children, but also many families incomplete as yet in 1851: it is a similar picture to that which emerged in the coalminer population of Lower Gornal at the same time, but producing a smaller mean family size.

In the working class households in Cradley generally, a greater proportion of both the married men and women fall outside this fertile 20-44 age group with 28.8% of the men and 26.4% of the women being over forty-five. This reflects the more *'normal'* structural composition of the working-class population compared to the coalminer group. This comparison can be seen more clearly by superimposing the data for one on top of the other, and this is done in Charts 4.11 and 4.12 below. An examination of the data for the wives shows some interesting differences between those married to coalminers and working class wives in general. Among the coalminer population there was a greater proportion of wives in all the age groups under 29 but a smaller proportion in the 30-34 age group. A much bigger proportion of the coalminer wives, 25.0%, fell into the 35-9 age group compared to 9.1% of the working-class wives in this group, while both groups of wives have the same proprtion in the 40-44 age group. Thus the effects on family size of serious imbalances in particular age groups, especially the 35-9 and 40-44, would tend to cancel each other out, and this helps to explain the similarity in family size between the coalminers and the rest of the working class. Coalminer wives over 45 were still grossly under-represented in the coalminer population, reflecting the general absence of older women in the coalminer population, a feature of their age structure discussed in chapter three.

(b) Fertility as measured by the ratio of wives to surviving children

The analysis of family size can be taken further by comparing wives of childbearing age, those between say 15 and 44 years of age, with the number of children surviving in their families and recorded in the Census Enumerators' Books. This data is shown in Table 4.20 below. The figures above in Table 4.20 portray a somewhat different picture of the coalminer households, both in comparison to coalminer households in Lower Gornal in 1851, and in comparison with their working-class counterparts in Cradley in 1851.

Chart 4.11

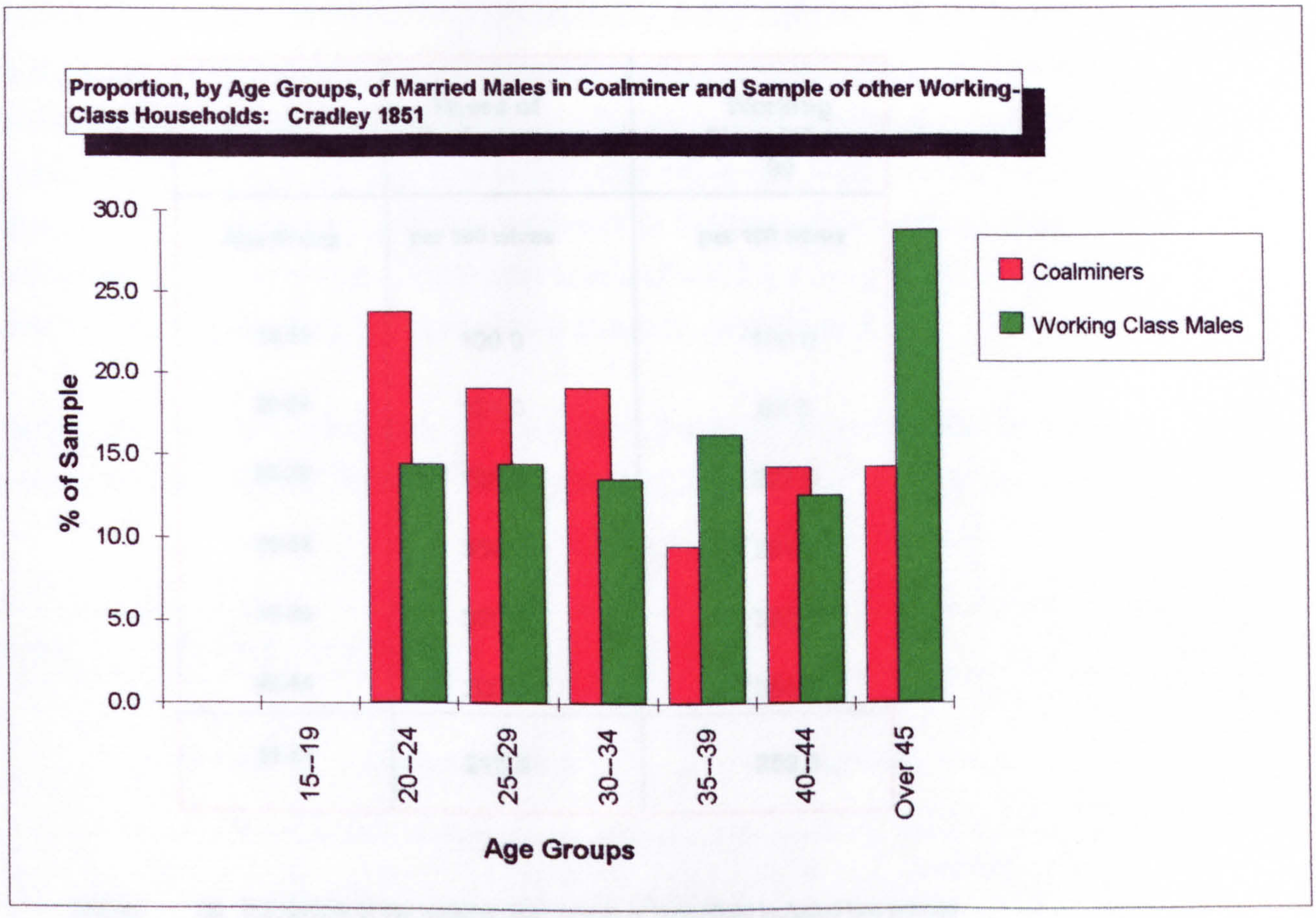


Chart 4.12

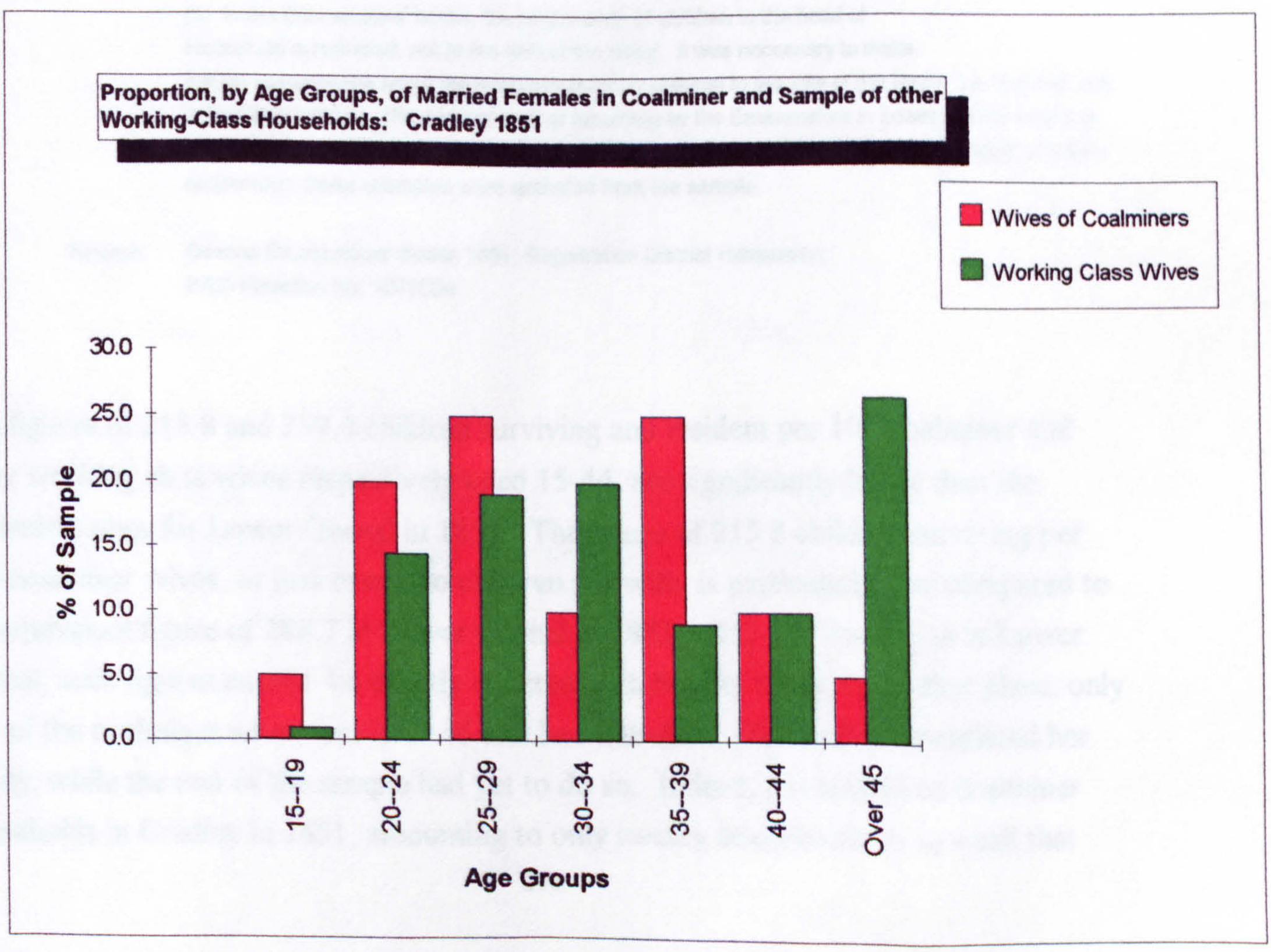


Table 4.20 Ratio of Surviving Children to Wives Aged 15-44: Cradley 1851

	Wives of Coalminers	Working Class Wives (a)
Age Group	**per 100 wives**	**per 100 wives**
15-19	100.0	100.0
20-24	125.0	83.3
25-29	160.0	220.0
30-34	350.0	281.8
35-39	320.0	372.7
40-44	200.0	366.7
15-44	**215.8**	**259.0**

Notes: (a) the sample of the working class heads of household included two women heads with families but who were not married and therefore not "wives"

(b) In the Enumerators' books, the relationship of children to the head of Household is recorded, not to the wife of the Head. It was necessary to make certain assumptions about the relationship of the children to the wife of the Head, i.e. that she was in fact their mother. The general level of recording by the Enumerators in Lower Gornal seems to display a high level of accuracy, as discussed elsewhere, but where there was any doubt about the relationship, these examples were excluded from the sample.

Source: Census Enumerators' Books 1851; Registration District Halesowen; PRO Microfilm No. 1072034

The figures of 215.8 and 259.0 children surviving and resident per 100 coalminer and other working class wives respectively aged 15-44, are significantly lower than the equivalent ones for Lower Gornal in 1851. The figure of 215.8 children surviving per 100 coalminer wives, or just over two children per wife, is particularly low compared to the equivalent figure of 288.7 in Lower Gornal in 1851. (25) Obviously, as in Lower Gornal, such figures cannot be exactly equated with fertility since, in the first place, only one of the coalminer wives was over 45 and had therefore, presumably, completed her family, while the rest of the sample had yet to do so. Indeed, the sample of coalminer households in Cradley in 1851, amounting to only twenty households, is so small that

there must, almost inevitably, be some skewing of the data as a result. Moreover, the figures take no account of leakage through mortality; other children will not have been resident on Census night; and some children will have already left home. However, by restricting the sample to wives aged 15-44 it is hoped to keep the leakage from the data to a minimum, and there is no reason to believe that infant and child mortality was significantly different for the coalminers compared to the rest of the working class. Therefore the figures do reflect comparative levels of fertility among the working class population, even though they can never be an accurate measure of it.

The coalminer wives in Cradley also appear to have lower fertility than their working-class counterparts, with a difference of 43.2 surviving and resident children per 100

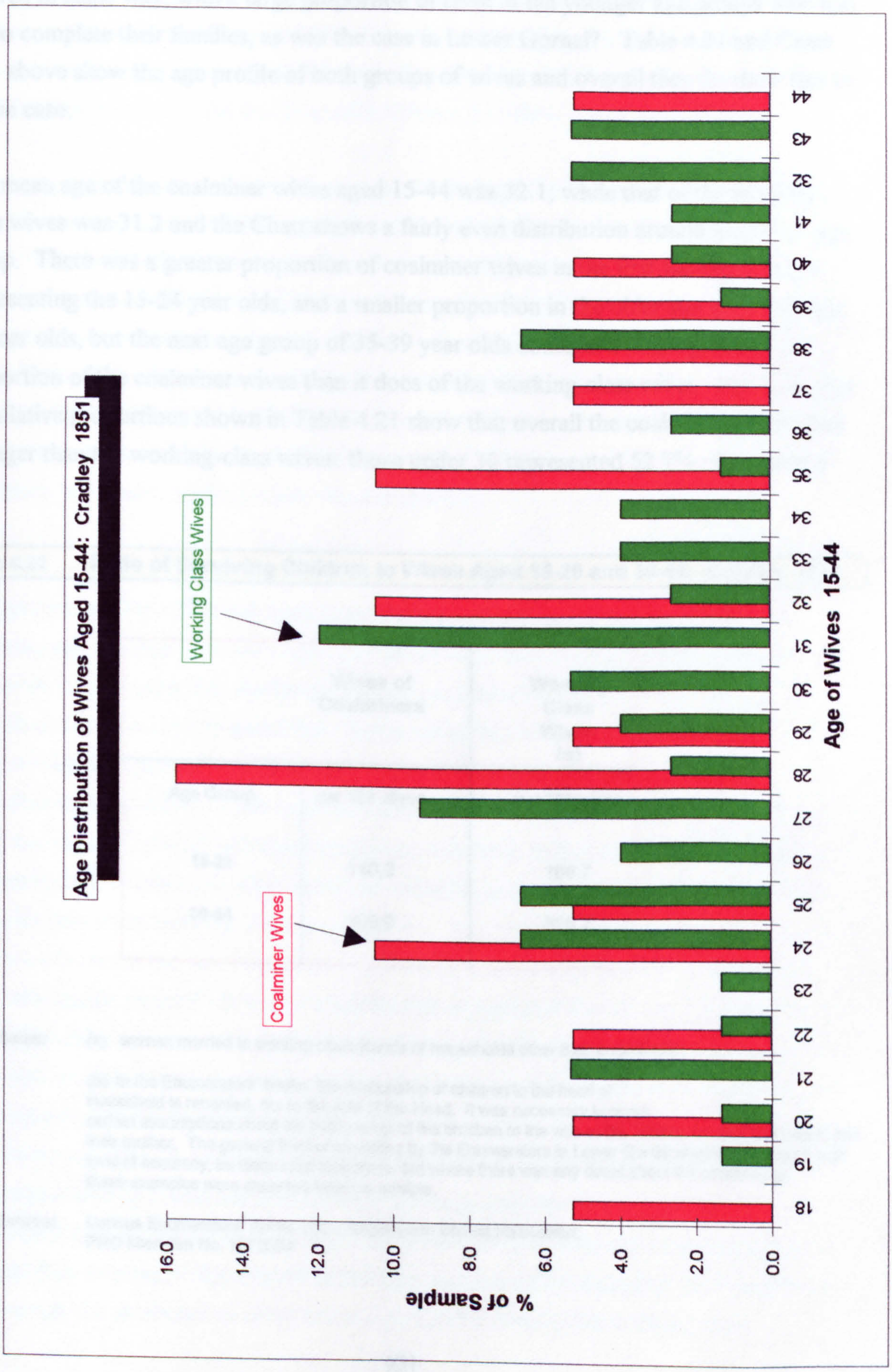
Table 4.21 Age Distribution of Wives 15-44: Cradley 1851

Age Group	Coalminer Wives		Working Class Wives (a)	
	%	*cumulative %*	%	*cumulative %*
15-19	5.3	*5.3*	1.3	*1.3*
20-24	21.1	*26.4*	16.0	*17.3*
25-29	26.3	*52.7*	26.7	*44.0*
30-34	10.5	*63.2*	28.0	*72.0*
35-39	26.3	*89.5*	12.0	*84*
40-44	10.5	*100.0*	16.0	*100.0*
Totals	100.0		100.0	

Notes: (a) the sample of the working class heads of household included two women heads with families but who were not married and therefore not "wives"

Source: Census Enumerators' Books 1851; Registration District Halesowen; PRO Microfilm No. 1072034

Chart 4.13


Age Distribution of Wives Aged 15-44: Cradley 1851
Working Class Wives
Coalminer Wives
Age of Wives 15-44
% of Sample
16.0
14.0
12.0
10.0
8.0
6.0
4.0
2.0
0.0
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
32
43
44

wives, twice as large almost as the difference between the two groups of wives in Lower Gornal in 1851. (26) Was this because the age profile of the coalminer wives was skewed in some way, with a large proportion of them in the younger age groups who had yet to complete their families, as was the case in Lower Gornal? Table 4.21 and Chart 4.13 above show the age profile of both groups of wives and overall they do show this to be the case.

The mean age of the coalminer wives aged 15-44 was 32.1, while that of the working-class wives was 31.2 and the Chart shows a fairly even distribution around the 25-34 age group. There was a greater proportion of coalminer wives in the first two age groups representing the 15-24 year olds, and a smaller proportion in the older age group of 30-34 year olds, but the next age group of 35-39 year olds contains a much greater proportion of the coalminer wives than it does of the working-class wives. However, the cumulative proportions shown in Table 4.21 show that overall the coalminer wives were younger than the working-class wives: those under 30 represented 52.7% of coalminer

Table 4.22 Ratio of Surviving Children to Wives Aged 15-29 and 30-44: Cradley 1851

	Wives of Coalminers	Working Class Wives (a)
Age Group	per 100 wives	per 100 wives
15-29	140.0	166.7
30-44	300.0	326.7

Notes: (a) women married to working class Heads of households other than coalminers

(b) In the Enumerators' books, the relationship of children to the head of Household is recorded, not to the wife of the Head. It was necessary to make certain assumptions about the relationship of the children to the wife of the Head, I.e. that she was in fact their mother. The general level of recording by the Enumerators in Lower Gornal seems to display a high level of accuracy, as discussed elsewhere, but where there was any doubt about the relationship, these examples were excluded from the sample.

Source: Census Enumerators' Books 1851; Registration District Halesowen; PRO Microfilm No. 1072034

wives but only 44.0% of the working-class wives. Thus it seems probable that among the coalminers there was a greater proportion of incomplete families than among the working class population as a whole, and thus fertility, as measured by the number of resident children, will appear to be lower. This notion is reinforced by categorising the age group data into what could, again, be called a young group and an older group of wives: 15-29 and 30-44 respectively, and this is done in Table 4.22 below.

The younger group of coalminer wives aged 15-29 appear to have a much lower fertility than the working class, 140.0 compared to 166.7 surviving and resident children per 100 wives. This is directly opposite to what was happening amongst the same group in the coalminer population of Lower Gornal, where apparent fertility was higher than amongst the equivalent working class group. The low apparent fertility of the young coalminer wives in Cradley, who make up a large proportion of the total, is resulting in a low overall apparent fertility. Moreover, this lower fertility is carried over to the older wives age 30-44, with exactly the same difference of 26.7 children per 100 wives between the coalminer wives and working-class wives in general.

It is, of course, possible that the methodology adopted here has led to these low figures for apparent fertility. This has been measured by comparing the number of children surviving and resident with the number of wives who have produced these children. However, it is possible that the lower number of children surviving to the younger coalminer wives in 1851 resulted from higher mortality in these households compared to the working class generally: young coalminer wives may simply not have been able to keep their children alive. If this was the case then these figures do not reflect fertility levels but rather those of mortality. However, it is hard, at first sight, to put forward a reasonable hypothesis as to why coalminer households should have experienced higher mortality than their working class counterparts. Why then should there be such a marked difference between the two coalminer populations in Lower Gornal and Cradley in the mid- nineteenth century? It would seem that an explanation for this must be sought in a number of different ways: the number of coalminer families in Cradley in 1851 was very small and this may have resulted in an untypical sample of the coalminer population, and consequently the results may be skewed; the even smaller 15-29 age group of wives may have been untypical of coalminer wives in having so few children; mortality may have been higher among coalminer families than working class families in general, and particularly among the younger families; the coalminer husbands and wives may have delayed their marriages; the coalminer families may have been delaying their families; or, can it simply be attributed to abnormally high fertility among the working class

population in general which is making the coalminer fertility look low by comparison? This last notion can be dismissed fairly easily since the figure of 166.7 children per 100 working class wives aged 15-29, shown in Table 4.22 above, is very close to the corresponding figure of 181.4 in Lower Gornal. In this respect the working class population in both communities in 1851 appeared to be similar. The factors causing marriages and families to be delayed will be discussed in the next chapter, but the explanation here probably lies in a combination of the untypicality of such a small coalminer population along with the effects of in-migration on marriage and family formation among this population. Unlike Lower Gornal in 1851 it must be remembered that Cradley's population was made up of many in-migrants, and of the coalminer heads of households only 15% originated from Cradley itself. (27)

Cradley 1891: The Nuclear Family

The basic structure of coalminer and other working class households in Cradley in 1891 is presented in Tables 4.23 and 4.24 and Chart 4.14. As for 1851, the coalminer data is based on a total sample of all those resident in the enumeration district of Cradley in 1891, whereas the data for the working class is based on a partial sample, and the methodology underpinning the sampling was discussed in chapter two. The data in Table 4.23 shows a mean nuclear family size of 4.8 and a mean number of children per family of 2.9. If these families are compared with other working class families in Cradley, the similarities are perhaps as startling as the differences were in Lower Gornal between the two populations: both the coalminer and the working-class families in general in Cradley had exactly the same mean family size and mean number of children per family. This can clearly be seen in Table 4.25 below which combines all the data for Lower Gornal and Cradley in 1851 and 1891.

The coalminer nuclear family in Cradley in 1851 was similar in structure to the rest of the working class, and this had not changed by 1891, whereas in Lower Gornal the coalminer population in 1851 had very marked differences to the working class in general, and, moreover, in 1891 these differences were still present. Coalminer families in Lower Gornal were not only larger than similar familes in Cradley, but were also larger than the working class in general both in Lower Gornal and Cradley. It would seem that the coalminer households in Cradley in the second half of the nineteenth century conformed to the pattern of family formation common to the rest of the working class with whom

Table 4.23 Structure of Coalminer Households by Size: Cradley 1891

Size of Group	CHILDREN (a)			FAMILY (b)			HOUSEHOLD (c)			HOUSEFUL (d)		
	N	%	Total People	N	%	Total People	N	%	Total People	N	%	Total People
0	15	*20.0*	0	0	*0*	0	0	*0*	0	0	*0*	0
1	12	*16.0*	12	1	*1.3*	1	1	*1.3*	1	0	*0.0*	0
2	15	*20.0*	30	14	*18.7*	28	13	*17.3*	26	8	*10.7*	16
3	6	*8.0*	18	15	*20.0*	45	13	*17.3*	39	14	*18.7*	42
4	7	*9.3*	28	12	*16.0*	48	11	*14.7*	44	11	*14.7*	44
5	7	*9.3*	35	7	*9.3*	35	10	*13.3*	50	12	*16.0*	60
6	3	*4.0*	18	6	*8.0*	36	7	*9.3*	42	8	*10.7*	48
7	5	*6.7*	35	7	*9.3*	49	6	*8.0*	42	6	*8.0*	42
8	3	*4.0*	24	3	*4.0*	24	4	*5.3*	32	6	*8.0*	48
9	2	*2.7*	18	5	*6.7*	45	5	*6.7*	45	5	*6.7*	45
10	0	*0.0*	0	3	*4.0*	30	3	*4.0*	30	3	*4.0*	30
11	0	*0.0*	0	2	*2.7*	22	1	*1.3*	11	1	*1.3*	11
12	0	*0.0*	0	0	*0.0*	0	1	*1.3*	12	1	*1.3*	12
Totals	75	*100.0*	218	75	*100.0*	363	75	*100.0*	374	75	*100.0*	398
Mean Size			2.9			4.8			5.0			5.3

Notes:
(a) children in nuclear families
(a) nuclear coalminer families of parents and their children
(b) nuclear coalminer families plus any other kin sharing the house
(c) all persons sharing a house with a coalminer head of house

Source: Census Enumerators' Books 1891; Registrar's District Stourbridge; Sub-District Halesowen; PRO Microfiche 375 1B

Table 4.24 **Structure of Sample of Working-Class Households other than Coalminers by Size: Cradley 1891**

Size of Group	CHILDREN (a)			FAMILY (b)			HOUSEHOLD (c)			HOUSEFUL (c)		
	N	%	Total People	N	%	Total People	N	%	Total People	N	%	Total People
0	16	*14.3*	0	0	*0.0*	0	0	*0.0*	0	0	*0.0*	0
1	24	*21.4*	24	5	*4.5*	5	1	*0.9*	1	1	*0.9*	1
2	16	*14.3*	32	13	*11.6*	26	7	*6.4*	14	4	*3.7*	8
3	20	*17.9*	60	23	*20.5*	69	28	*25.7*	84	27	*24.8*	81
4	8	*7.1*	32	18	*16.1*	72	15	*13.8*	60	13	*11.9*	52
5	9	*8.0*	45	17	*15.2*	85	18	*16.5*	90	20	*18.3*	100
6	10	*8.9*	60	8	*7.1*	48	12	*11.0*	72	14	*12.8*	84
7	4	*3.6*	28	9	*8.0*	63	8	*7.3*	56	9	*8.3*	63
8	5	*4.5*	40	10	*8.9*	80	10	*9.2*	80	11	*10.1*	88
9	0	*0.0*	0	4	*3.6*	36	4	*3.7*	36	4	*3.7*	36
10	0	*0.0*	0	5	*4.5*	50	5	*4.6*	50	5	*4.6*	50
11	0	*0.0*	0	0	*0.0*	0	1	*0.9*	11	1	*0.9*	11
Totals	112	*100.0*	321	112	*100.0*	534	109	*100.0*	554	109	*100.0*	574
Mean Size			2.9			4.8			5.1			5.3

Notes:
(a) children in working class nuclear families
(b) nuclear working class families consisting of parents and their children
(c) nuclear working class families plus any other kin sharing the house
(d) all persons sharing a house with a working class head

Source:
Census Enumerators'Books 1851; Registrar's District Stourbridge; Sub-District Halesowen; PRO Microfiche 375 1B

Chart 4.14

Relative Sizes of Coalminer and other Working Class Families: Cradley 1891

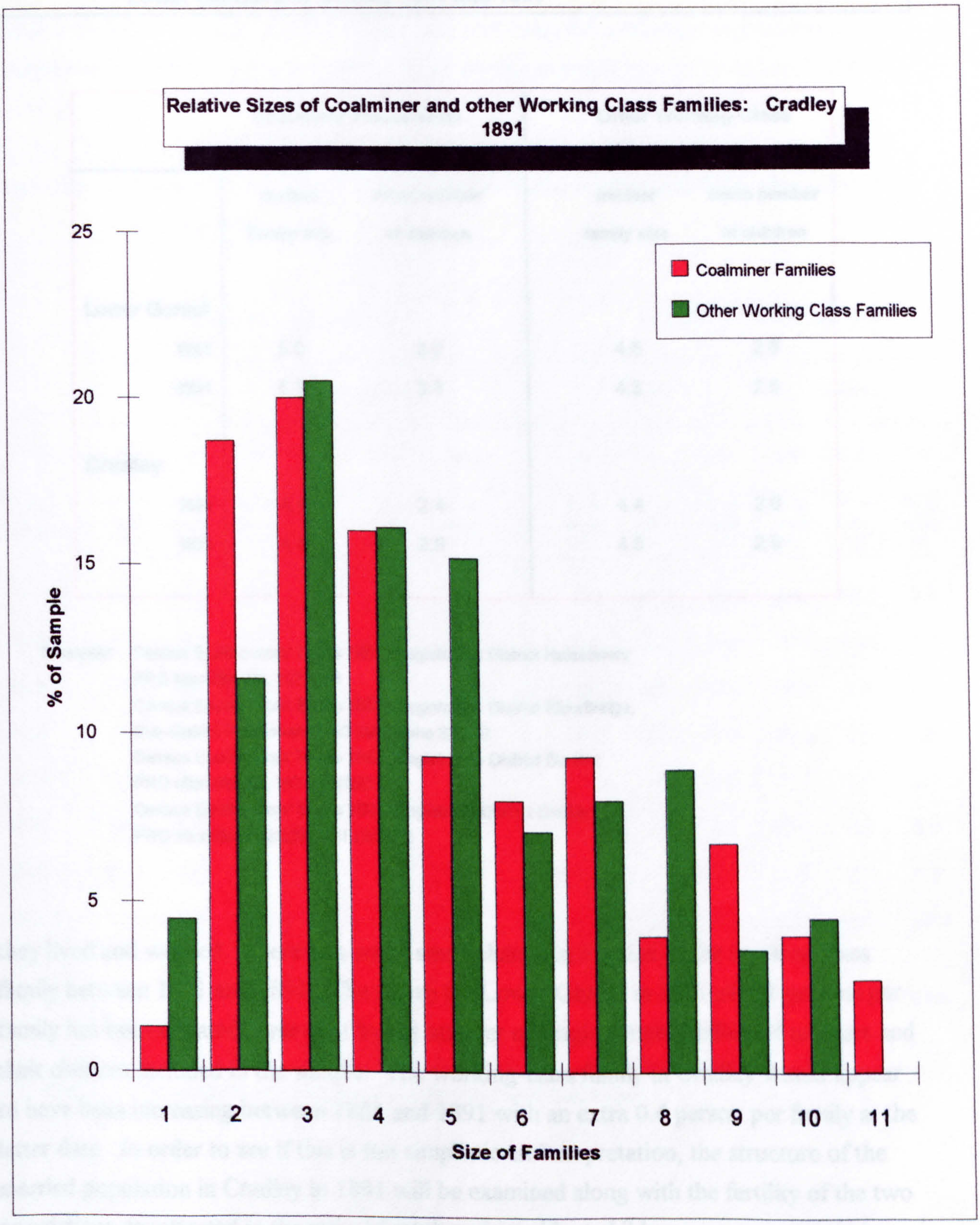


Table 4.25 **Nuclear Family Size in Coalminer and other Working-Class Households: Lower Gornal and Cradley 1851 and 1891**

	Coalminer Households		Other Working-Class Households	
	nuclear family size	mean number of children	nuclear family size	mean number of children
Lower Gornal				
1851	5.0	3.0	4.5	2.6
1891	5.3	3.3	4.3	2.5
Cradley				
1851	4.4	2.4	4.4	2.6
1891	4.8	2.9	4.8	2.9

Sources: Census Enumerators' Books 1851; Registration District Halesowen; PRO Microfilm No. 1072034
Census Enumerators' Books 1891; Registration District Stourbridge; Sub-District Halesowen; PRO Microfiche 375 1B
Census Enumerators' Books 1851; Registration District Dudley; PRO Microfilm No. HO 1072030
Census Enumerators' Books 1891; Registrar's District Dudley; PRO Microfiche 12/2291 and 12/2292

they lived and worked. There was some small change in the size of the working class family between 1851 and 1891. The figure for Lower Gornal in 1891 of 4.3 persons per family has been deflated somewhat by the number of single parent families of mothers and their children included in the sample. The working-class family in Cradley would appear to have been increasing between 1851 and 1891 with an extra 0.4 person per family at the latter date. In order to see if this is too simplistic an interpretation, the structure of the married population in Cradley in 1891 will be examined along with the fertility of the two populations as reflected in the ratio of mothers to resident children.

(a) The structure of the married population

Table 4.26 below reconstructs the marital status of both the coalminer and working-class population in general. If the married women are examined, it can be seen that 78.0% of

Table 4.26 Maritial Status by Age of Coalminer and other Working-Class Households: Cradley 1891

Age Groups	Coalminer Households						Working Class Households					
	Male			Female			Male			Female		
	M	S	W	M	S	W	M	S	W	M	S	W
	% of category	% of category	% of category	%of category	% of category	% of category	% of category	% of category	% of category	% of category	% of category	% of category
0-14	0.0	70.7	0.0	0.0	77.4	0.0	0.0	66.7	0.0	0.0	69.3	0.0
15-19	0.0	19.0	0.0	1.3	12.1	0.0	0.0	17.2	0.0	0.9	20.3	0.0
20-24	16.0	6.0	0.0	14.3	6.5	0.0	5.6	9.6	0.0	12.6	5.2	0.0
25-29	13.3	2.6	0.0	20.8	3.2	33.3	22.2	3.0	0.0	20.4	2.6	0.0
30-34	10.7	0.0	0.0	14.3	0.8	0.0	13.9	1.5	0.0	11.7	2.0	0.0
35-39	16.0	0.9	0.0	19.5	0.0	0.0	7.4	0.0	0.0	14.6	0.0	0.0
40-44	10.7	0.0	0.0	9.1	0.0	0.0	10.2	0.5	0.0	7.8	0.7	0.0
Over 45	33.4	0.9	100.0	20.8	0.0	66.7	40.8	1.5	100.0	32.1	0.0	100.0
Totals	100.1	100.1	100.0	100.1	100.0	100.0	100.1	100.0	100.0	100.1	100.1	100.0

Source: Census Enumerators' Books 1891; Registration District Stourbridge; Sub-District Halesowen; PRO Microfiche 375 1B

the coalminer wives fall within the age group 20-44, the group from which it would be expected that the vast majority of babies would come since both legitimate and illegitimate births to girls under twenty, and births to women over the age of 45, form a very small proportion of the total number of children in coalminer households. The

proportion of married women in this category, however, is lower than the 90.0% in Cradley in 1851.

In the working-class households generally in Cradley in 1891, a greater proportion of both the married men and women fall outside this fertile 20-44 age group, with 40.8% and 32.1% of the men and women respectively being over forty-five. Thus the married coalminer population was still different in its age distribution from the working class generally, but by 1891 it was showing a more *'normal'* age distribution in the sense that it conformed more to that of the rest of the working class with whom the coalminers lived. The comparison can be seen more clearly if the data for the working class generally is superimposed on that for the coalminer population, and this is done in Charts 4.15 and 4.16 below. The data for the wives shows a remarkable similarity in age structure between those married to coalminers and those to other working-class men. In no age group, except those over 45, was there a difference in proportional size greater than 5% between the two groups of wives. Wives over 45 were still under-represented in the coalminer population of Cradley in 1891, as they had been in 1851; and, indeed, as they were in Lower Gornal's population at both dates. It is obvious from the data presented so far that the coalminer population, in the age distribution of those who were married, was *'normalising'* to that of the working class in general by 1891, but it still had some way to go before there would be close parity between them.

(b) Fertility as measured by the ratio of wives to surviving children

The analysis of family size can be taken further by comparing wives of childbearing age, those between 15 and 45 years of age, with the number of children shown alive in their families in the Census. This data is shown in Table 4.27 below.

The figure above of 312.7 children per 100 coalminer wives is much higher than the figure of 215.8 children in 1851, a difference of 96.9 children per 100 wives, or almost one child per wife extra in 1891. The reason lies in the process of *'normalisation'* of the age profile of the coalminer married population which was occurring in the late nineteenth century. In 1851 the apparent fertility ratio was artificially depressed by an abnormally young population; as this population achieved a more normal structure, so fertility returned to the levels associated with this structure. The fertility ratios displayed by both the coalminer and the working class wives in general in Cradley in 1891

Chart 4.15

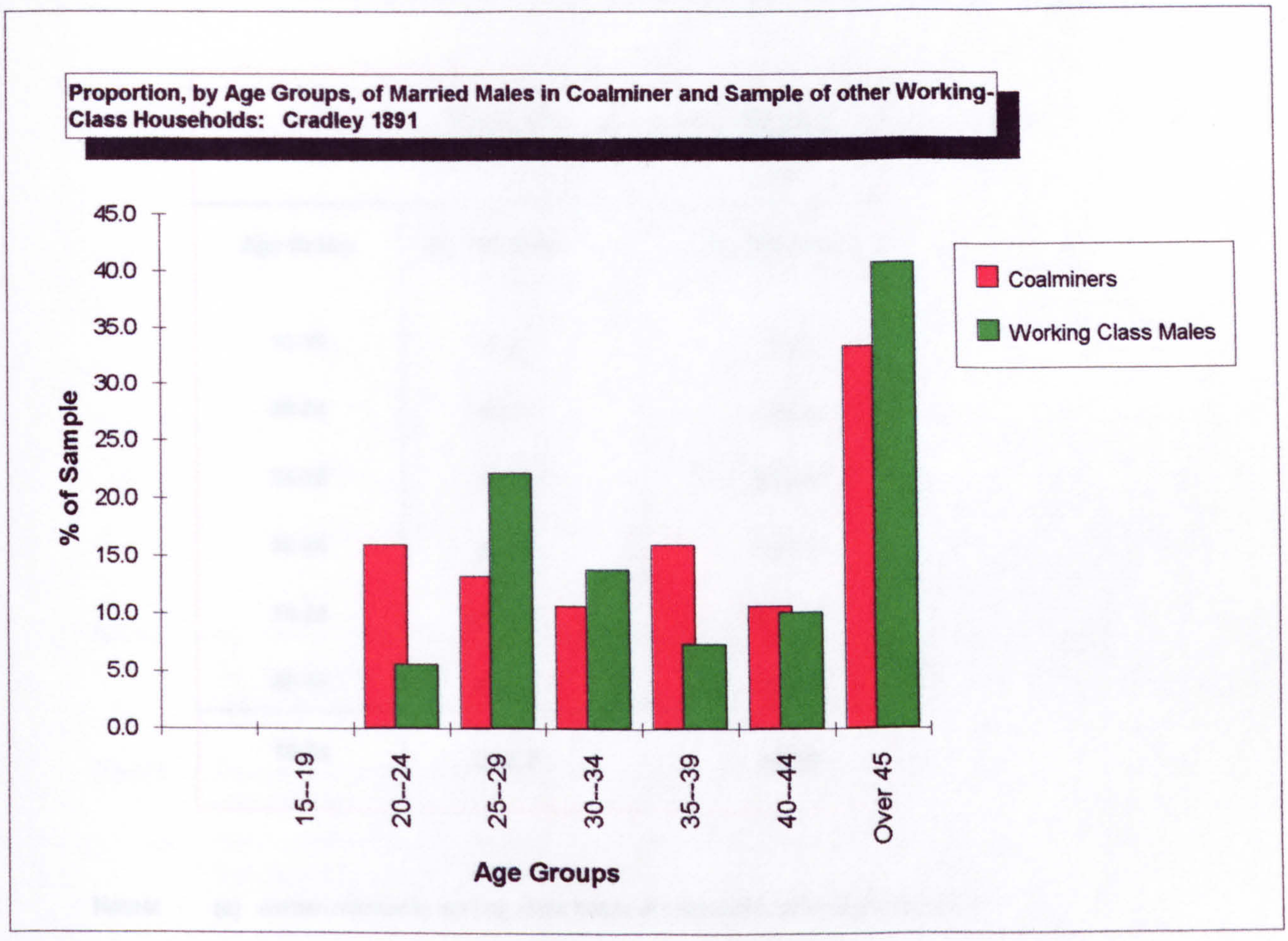


Chart 4.16

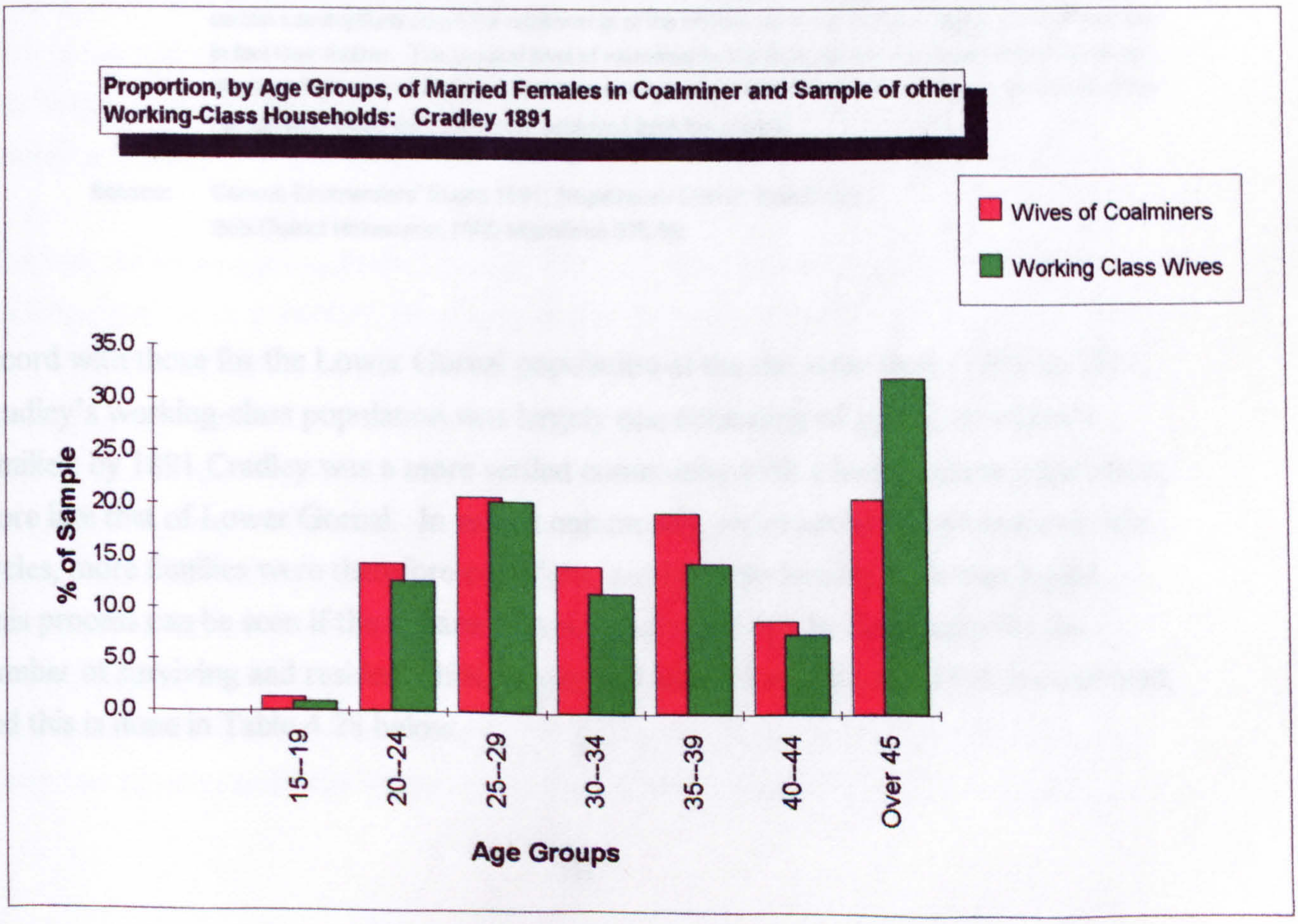


Table 4.27 Ratio of Surviving Children to Wives Aged 15-44: Cradley 1891

	Wives of Coalminers	Working Class Wives (a)
Age Group	per 100 wives	per 100 wives
15-19	0.0	0.0
20-24	60.0	100.0
25-29	192.3	200.0
30-34	409.1	325.0
35-39	485.7	457.1
40-44	400.0	562.5
15-44	312.7	300.0

Notes: (a) women married to working class heads of households other than coalminers

(b) In the Enumerators' books, the relationship of children to the head of Household is recorded, not to the wife of the Head. It was necessary to make certain assumptions about the relationship of the children to the wife of the Head, I.e. that she was in fact their mother. The general level of recording by the Enumerators in Lower Gornal seems to display a high level of accuracy, as discussed elsewhere, but where there was any doubt about the relationship, these examples were excluded from the sample.

Source: Census Enumerators' Books 1891; Registration District Stourbridge; Sub-District Halesowen; PRO Microfiche 375 1B

accord with those for the Lower Gornal population at the the same time. (28) In 1851, Cradley's working-class population was largely one consisting of young, in-migrant families: by 1891 Cradley was a more settled community with a less transient population, more like that of Lower Gornal. In such a community, more adults completed their life cycles, more families were therefore complete, and thus the fertility ratio was higher. This process can be seen if the apparent fertility, as measured by the figures for the number of surviving and resident children per 100 wives, for 1851 and 1891 is combined, and this is done in Table 4.28 below.

Table 4.28 Ratio of Surviving Children to Wives Aged 15-44: Cradley 1851 and 1891

	Wives of Coalminers	Working Class Wives (a)
	per 100 wives aged 15-44	per 100 wives aged 15-44
1851	215.8	259.0 (b)
1891	312.7	300.0

Notes: (a) women married to working class Heads of households other than coalminers
(b) the sample of the working class heads of household included two women heads with families but who were not married and therefore not "wives"

Source: Census Enumerators' Books 1851; Registration District Halesowen; PRO Microfilm No. 1072034
Census Enumerators' Books 1891; Registration District Stourbridge; Sub-District Halesowen; PRO Microfiche 375 1B

The argument that there was a *'normalising'* of the coalminer population to conform more to the rest of the working class in general is reinforced by an examination of the age distribution of the wives aged 15-44 in the coalminer and working class population in general in Cradley in 1891, and the data is presented in Table 4.29 below.

Although the mean ages of these wives in 1891, 31.8 for the coalminer and 31.0 for the working-class wives generally, were very similar to those in 1851, their age distribution was somewhat different. In 1851 the coalminer wives were younger than working-class wives generally, but as Table 4.29 below and Chart 4.17 below show, by 1891 the age profile is more regularly distributed around the 25-29 age group, with only the 35-39 age group of coalminer wives being proportionately large, while the proportion of coalminer wives under 30 was only 41.8% in 1891 compared to 52.7% in 1851. This notion that the Cradley coalminer population was normalising to conform more with the working class population generally by 1891, in so far as some aspects of family demography was concerned, is reinforced by categorising the age group data into what is called a young group and an older group of wives: 15-29 and 30-44 respectively. This is done in

Table 4.29 Age Distribution of Wives 15-44: Cradley 1891

Age Group	Coalminer Wives		Working Class Wives (a)	
	%	*cumulative %*	%	*cumulative %*
15-19	0.0	*0.0*	1.5	*1.5*
20-24	18.2	*18.2*	18.2	*19.7*
25-29	23.6	*41.8*	28.8	*48.5*
30-34	20.0	*61.8*	18.2	*66.7*
35-39	25.5	*87.3*	21.2	*87.9*
40-44	12.7	*100.0*	12.1	*100.0*
Totals	100.0		100.0	

Notes: (a) women married to working class heads of households other than coalminers

Source: Census Enumerators' Books 1891; Registration District Stourbridge; Sub-District Halesowen; PRO Microfiche 375 1B

Table 4.30 below which also contains the 1851 data for the purposes of comparison.

The figures clearly show that the rise in apparent fertility of the whole age group aged 15-44 between 1851 and 1891 was due to an increase in the number of children surviving and resident with the older wives rather than the younger. Indeed among the younger wives of both coalminers and the working class generally there was a small fall in apparent fertility between 1851 and 1891, while among the older groups there had been a substantial rise of 140.6 and 108.6 children per 100 coalminer wives and working class wives respectively. This amounts to almost an extra one and a half children per coalminer wife and just over an extra child per working class wife generally by 1891 for those in this older age group aged 30-44. Given these changes, it is hardly surprising that family size rose between 1851 and 1891, and it would seem, at first sight, that in working class households generally there was some reduction in infant and child mortality, due perhaps to improved levels of child care generally, and possibly to improvements in the standard of living. Thus, was this older group of wives maintaining the high level of fertility evident among the younger wives, and thus a corresponding larger family size after 1851,

Chart 4.17

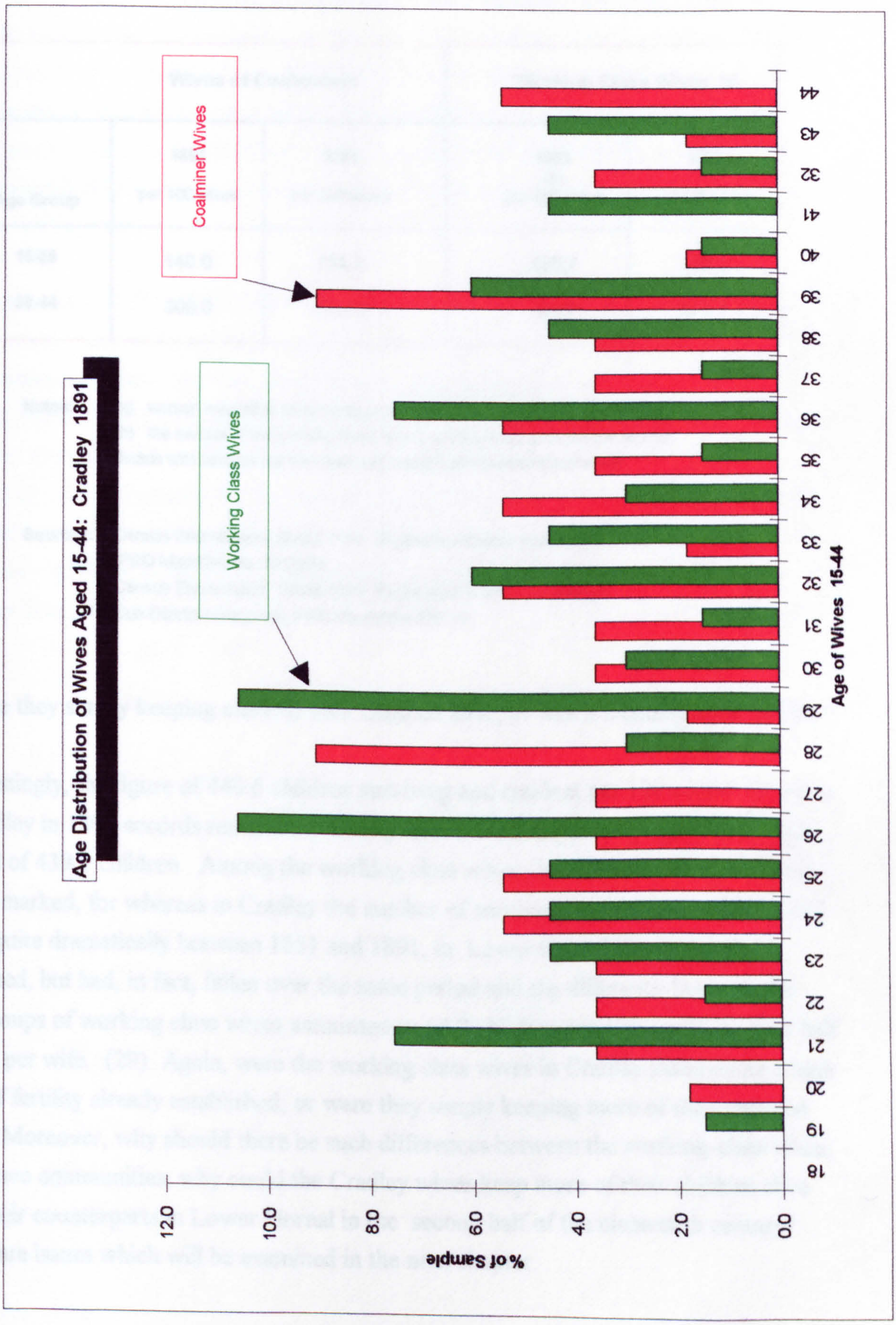

Coalminer Wives
Working Class Wives
Age Distribution of Wives Aged 15-44: Cradley 1891
Age of Wives 15-44
% of Sample
44
43
32
41
40
39
38
37
36
35
34
33
32
31
30
29
28
27
26
25
24
23
22
21
20
19
18
12.0
10.0
8.0
6.0
4.0
2.0
0.0

Table 4.30 Ratio of Surviving Children to Wives Aged 15-29 and 30-44: Cradley 1851 and 1891

	Wives of Coalminers		Working Class Wives (a)	
Age Group	1851 per 100 wives	1891 per 100 wives	1851 (b) per 100 wives	1891 per 100 wives
15-29	140.0	134.8	166.7	156.3
30-44	300.0	440.6	326.7	435.3

Notes: (a) women married to working class heads of households other than coalminers
(b) the sample of the working class heads of household included two women heads with families but who were not married and therefore not "wives"

Sources: Census Enumerators' Books 1851; Registration District Halesowen; PRO Microfilm No. 1072034
Census Enumerators' Books 1891; Registration District Stourbridge; Sub-District Halesowen; PRO Microfiche 375 1B

or were they simply keeping more of their children alive, or was it a combination of both?

Interestingly, the figure of 440.6 children surviving and resident per 100 coalminer wives in Cradley in 1891 accords remarkably closely with the corresponding figure for Lower Gornal of 439.1 children. Among the working class wives, however, the equivalence is not so marked, for whereas in Cradley the number of surviving and resident children had risen quite dramatically between 1851 and 1891, in Lower Gornal this had not happened, but had, in fact, fallen over the same period and the difference between the two groups of working class wives amounted to 64.7 children per 100 wives, or over half a child per wife. (29) Again, were the working class wives in Cradley maintaining a high level of fertility already established, or were they simply keeping more of their children alive? Moreover, why should there be such differences between the working-class wives in the two communities: why could the Cradley wives keep more of their children alive than their counterparts in Lower Gornal in the second half of the nineteenth century? These are issues which will be examined in the next chapter.

Thus it would seem that in a community like Lower Gornal, where the coalminer housholds formed a substantial part of the total number of households, they did, in the second half of the nineteenth century, preserve certain differences in their patterns of family formation and size compared to the rest of the working class in general. This was partly a result of an abnormal age distribution in the coalminer population; in particular a young married population under thirty being evident in 1851. By 1891 there had been what could be called a *'normalising'* of the age profile of the coalminer population: but they were still displaying patterns of family formation and structure which were different to the working class.

In a community like Cradley, where coalminers were only one small occupational group among many other working class occupational groups, and where there was a predominance of metal workers, then the coalminer families do not display, to any marked degree, those differences in the pattern of family formation and structure evident in Lower Gornal at the same time. Moreover, although the proportion of coalminer families in Cradley increased in the second half of the nineteenth century, the similarities with the rest of the working class were maintained, and the coalminers did not stand out as having significant demographic differences as an occupational group by 1891, any more so than they had done in 1851.

NOTES for CHAPTER FOUR

1 Census 1851, Population Tables, I, xxxv-xxxviii

2 **P.M.Tillott**, 'Sources of inaccuracy in the 1851 and 1861 censuses', **E.Wrigley**, ed., *Nineteenth Century Society*, (1972), p.90, 91-2

3 Ibid. p.90-1

4 P.M.Tillott, op.cit., p.103

5 W.A.Armstrong, *The Interpretation of Census Enumerators' Books*, (1968), pp.77-8; **M.Anderson**, 'The Study of Family Structure', E.Wrigley, ed., *Nineteenth Century Society*, (1972), pp.135-7; **M.Anderson**, *Family Structure in Nineteenth Century Lancashire*, (1971)

6 M.Anderson, op.cit., (1972), pp.135-7

7 P.M.Tillott, op.cit., p.115

8 **W.A.Armstrong**, 'The Census Enumerators' Books; a Commentary', **R.Lawton**, ed., *The Census and Social Structure*, (1978), p.62

9 **J.Lewis**, *Labour and Love*, (reference mislaid)

10 **M.Mills**, 'Women, Family and Community on the Cannock Chase Coalfield in the 1880's', unpublished Wolverhampton Polytechnic MA Dissertation, (1987), pp.49-50

11 **M.Haines**, 'Fertility, Nuptiality and Occupation. A Study of Coalmining Populations and Regions in England and Wales in the Mid-Nineteenth Century', *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, VIII, (1977), p.247; **M.Haines**, *Fertility,and Occupation; Population Patterns in Industrialisation*, (1979), p.158 and 193; **D.Friedlander**, 'Demographic Patterns and Socio-Economic Characteristics of the Coalmining Population of England and Wales in the Mid-nineteenth Century', *Economic Development and Cultural Change*, XXII, (1977), p.46; **S.Chaplin**, 'Durham Mining Villages', **M.Bulmer**, ed., *Mining and Social Change*, (1978)

12. S.Chaplin, op.cit., p.65

13 E.Billington, op.cit., pp.45-7; **J.Benson**, *British Coalminers in the Nineteenth Century: A Social History*, (1980), p.121

14 E.Billington, op.cit., p.46

15 M.Mills, op.cit., p.51

16 **G.Barnsby**, *Social Conditions in the Black Country 1800-1900*, (1980), p.84

17 **M.Haines**, 'Fertility, Nuptiality and Occupation. A Study of Coalmining Populations and Regions in England and Wales in the Mid-Nineteenth Century', *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, VIII, (1977), pp.248-9

18 **C.Dyehouse**, 'Working Class Mothers and Infant Mortality in England, 1895-1914', *Journal of Social History*, 12, (1978), pp. 248-251

19 Ibid., pp.253-4

20 **G.Barnsby**, op.cit. p.84

21 **J.Ridgway**, 'Marriage, Family and Work: Coalmining Family History in Lower Gornal in the Late Nineteenth Century', Unpublished M.A. Dissertation, Wolverhampton Polytechnic, (1989), p.67

22 See chapter 3

23 see Chapter 4, Table 4.6

24 See Chapter 3, Table 3.17

25 See Chapter 4, Table 4.12

26 Ibid.

27 see Chapter 2, Table 2.13

28 see Chapter 4, Table 4.13

29 see Chapter 4, Table 4.14

CHAPTER FIVE

Shared Households

Any analysis of household structure, the attitudes which underpin such households, and the relationships present in those households would not be complete without an examination of those people who shared households with nuclear families: both those who were related in some way to the nuclear family at the core of the household, and that amorphous group of people who at first sight appeared to have no connection with the nuclear family other than sharing in some way its living space. The first part of the analysis will involve establishing the extent of shared occupancy in Lower Gornal and Cradley in 1851 and 1891.

Lower Gornal 1851

The Pattern of Residence

Table 5.1 below shows the pattern of residence in those Lower Gornal households which have been described as coalminer households throughout the Thesis since they have a coalminer recorded as the head of the household; and also in those households described as consisting of the working class generally, since they were recorded as having a working class head other than a coalminer in 1851.

The pattern of residence in both types of households is overwhelmingly that of nuclear families of married couples or parents and their unmarried children, with a small number of households containing co-resident kin and persons unrelated to the head. In coalminer households particularly, this pattern was even more pronounced with 79.6% of such households being in this category, compared to 67.1% of the working class households generally.

If these households are translated into numbers of people, then of the 1221 persons resident in coalminer households, less than 1.0% were heads living alone or with persons not related to them; only 2.7% lived either as servants or lodgers unrelated to anyone in the households in which they lived; while the remainder of the coalminer population, 97.2%, lived in households in which there were people related to them by blood or marriage.

Table 5.1 **The Pattern of Household Residence in Coalminer and other Working-Class Households: Lower Gornal 1851**

	Coalminer Households		Other Working Class Households	
	N	%	N	%
One nuclear family only (a)	179	*79.6*	173	*67.1*
Other kin only	12	*5.3*	51	*19.8*
Other kin and other occupants unrelated to the head	4 (b)	*1.8*	5 (c)	*1.9*
Lodgers only	17	*7.6*	13	*5.0*
Visitors only (d)	11	*4.9*	12	*4.7*
Servants only (e)	2	*0.9*	4	*1.6*
Totals	225	*100.1*	258	*100.1*

Notes: (a) These households consist of single or widowed heads, married couples, and married couples with unmarried children
(b) This category consisted of 1household shared with a visitor
1household shared with a servant
2 households shared with lodgers
(c) This category consisted of 1household shared with a visitor
1household shared with a servant
3 households shared with lodgers
(d) These are assumed to be unrelated to the Head, but many were probably related to the wife of the Head whose surname is not known
(e) Households with no other persons except servants lodging

Source: Census Enumerators' Books; Registrar's District Dudley;
PRO Microfilm No. HO 1072030

The picture is no different in the working class households in general where, of the 1388 persons resident in the sample, only 0.2% of the heads lived alone or with unrelated persons; only 2.4% were servants or lodgers unrelated to any other person in the household in which they lived; the remainder, 97.4% of the working class population, lived with persons related to them by blood or marriage. It is likely also that even some of the very small numbers of unrelated lodgers in both kinds of household were, in fact, related to the household head in some way. Thus working class Lower Gornal in 1851 was, like Preston at the same date, *"predominantly a*

familistic society". (1) Only a very tiny minority, probably less than 2%, of the working class population were out of physical contact with family and kin.

The Extended Family

The only significant difference which appeared to exist in 1851 between the coalminer and other working class households in terms of the overall pattern of residence, and which is clearly shown in Table 5.1 above, was that fewer of the coalminer households were shared with kin outside the immediate nuclear family: 7.1% compared to 21.7% of the working class households generally. This difference in the proportion of households being shared with other kin needs to be examined in closer detail, and the data showing the different combinations of kin in the extended families of both coalminer heads and those of the working-class sample is presented in Table 5.2 below.

The differences between the pattern of residence of coalminer households and those of the working class in general , especially with regard to the relationships within their extended families, emerge quite starkly from Table 5.2 below. The overwhelming majority of coalminer households in Lower Gornal in 1851, 92.4%, were simple nuclear families of either married couples or parents with unmarried children, with very clear relationships within the wider extended, or "stem" family, the most common being that between parents and their co-resident married children, sometimes also with grandchildren. Of course some of these households were also shared with visitors and lodgers, and this pattern of relationships will be discussed later.

Among the working class in general these clear patterns of relationships were less common, with only 76.7% of the households consisting of simple nuclear families of married couples or parents with unmarried children, a figure much closer to that which Michael Anderson found in his monumental study of Preston in 1851, when 73.0% of the households consisted of nuclear families only. (2) Clearly the working class in general were able to maintain their relationships with their kin, in terms of co-residence, more successfully than the coalminers in Lower Gornal in the mid-nineteenth century, not only in the volume of these relationships, but also in their variety and complexity. Almost paradoxically the kinship co-residence pattern evident in coalminer households resembles more closely that found in late twentieth century households. (3) In working class households in general, the proportion of those families usually described by sociologists as 'stem' families, or 'extended' families,

Table 5.2 **Structure of the Families of Coalminer and other Working-Class Heads of Household: Lower Gornal 1851**

	Coalminer Households			Other working class households		
	N	%		N	%	
Solo head, or sharing with unrelated persons	1	*0.5*	*0.5*	*3*	*1.2*	*1.2*
Married couple only	16	*7.1*		*4*	*1.5*	
Married couple or widowed person with unmarried children	192	*85.3*	*92.4*	*194*	*75.2*	*76.7*
Married couple or widowed person with married children	1	*0.4*		*2*	*0.8*	
Married couple or widowed person with both unmarried and married children	1	*0.4*		*3*	*1.2*	
Married couple or widowed person with married children and grandchildren	3	*1.3*		*6*	*2.3*	
Married couple or widowed person with unmarried children, married children and grandchildren	3	*1.3*		*3*	*1.2*	
Married couple or widowed person with grandchildren	0	*0.0*		*4*	*1.5*	
Other combinations of relatives	8	*3.6*	*3.4*	*39*	*15.1*	*7.0*
			3.6			*15.1*
	225	*100.0*	*100.0*	*258*	*100.0*	*100.0*

Source: Census Enumerators' Books; Registrar's District Dudley; PRO Microfilm No. HO 1072030

consisting of parents with their married children and grandchildren, sometimes co-residing with younger unmarried siblings, was more than twice the size of that in coalminer households, 7.0% compared to 3.4%. However, by far the most significant difference between the two types of households lies in the proportion of households which contained combinations of kin outside both the nuclear and stem families. In the coalminer households this only amounted to 3.6%, while in the working class households it was as high as 15.1% of the total. The working class sample of

Table 5.3 **Relationship of Kin by Age to the Head of Coalminer Households: Lower Gornal 1851**

	0–14		15–19		20–24		25–29		30–39		40–49		50–59		60+		Totals	
	N	*%*	*N*	*%*	*N*	*%*	*N*	*%*	*N*	*%*	*N*	*%*	*N*	*%*	*N*	*%*	*N*	*%*
Father/Father-in-law															1	*2.2*	1	*2.2*
Mother/Mother-in-law																	0	*0.0*
Married/Widowed Son					1	*2.2*			1	*2.2*							2	*4.3*
Married/Widowed Daughter					2	*4.3*	1	*2.2*									3	*6.5*
Brother	1	*2.2*															1	*2.2*
Sister	1	*2.2*	1	*2.2*							1	*2.2*					3	*6.5*
Nephew/Neice with parent	1	*2.2*															1	*2.2*
Nephew/Neice without parent	1	*2.2*															2	*2.2*
Grandchild with parent	12	*26.1*															12	*26.1*
Grandchild without parent	6	*13.0*	2	*4.3*													8	*17.4*
Son-in-law			1	*2.2*	3	*6.5*	3	*6.5*									7	*15.2*
Daughter-in-law					1	*2.2*			2	*4.3*							3	*6.5*
Stepson	1	*2.2*															1	*2.2*
Stepdaughter	1	*2.2*															1	*2.2*
Brother-in-law															1	*2.2*	1	*2.2*
Totals	24	*52.2*	4	*8.7*	7	*15.2*	4	*8.7*	3	*6.5*	1	*2.2*	0	*0.0*	2	*4.3*	46	*97.8*

Source: Census Enumerators' Books 1851;Registrar's District Dudley;PRO Microfilm No. HO 1072030

Table 5.4 **Relationship of Kin by Age to the Head of Working-Class Households: Lower Gornal 1851**

	0–14		15–19		20–24		25–29		30–39		40–49		50–59		60+		Totals	
	N	*%*	*N*	*%*	*N*	*%*	*N*	*%*	*N*	*%*	*N*	*%*	*N*	*%*	*N*	*%*	*N*	*%*
Father/Father-in-law																	0	*0.0*
Mother/Mother-in-law											1	*0.7*			1	*0.7*	2	*1.3*
Married/Widowed Son					1	*0.7*	4	*2.6*	1	*0.7*	1	*0.7*					7	*4.6*
Married/Widowed Daughter			2	*1.3*	3	*2.0*	4	*2.6*	1	*0.7*			1	*0.7*			11	*7.2*
Brother	1	*0.7*	1	*0.7*					2	*1.3*	1	*0.7*					5	*3.3*
Sister									1	*0.7*	2	*1.3*					3	*2.0*
Nephew/Neice with parent			1	*0.7*													1	*0.7*
Nephew/Neice without parent	13	*8.6*	4	*2.6*	4	*2.6*											21	*13.8*
Grandchild with parent	29	*19.1*	1	*0.7*	2	*1.3*											32	*21.1*
Grandchild without parent	19	*12.5*	4	*2.6*	4	*2.6*											27	*17.8*
Son-in-law			1	*0.7*	3	*2.0*	4	*2.6*	1	*0.7*	1	*0.7*					10	*6.6*
Daughter-in-law					4	*2.6*	1	*0.7*	2	*1.3*							7	*4.6*
Stepson	3	*2.0*			1	*0.7*			1	*0.7*	1	*0.7*					6	*3.9*
Stepdaughter	7	*4.6*	1	*0.7*			2	*1.3*									10	*6.6*
Brother-in-law			1	*0.7*					1	*0.7*			1	*0.7*			3	*2.0*
Sister-in-law	1	*0.7*			1	*0.7*			1	*0.7*			1	*0.7*			4	*2.6*
Other relative					1	*0.7*									2	*1.3*	3	*2.0*
Totals	73	*47.4*	16	*10.5*	24	*14.5*	15	*9.9*	11	*6.6*	7	*4.6*	3	*1.3*	3	*0.7*	152	*100.0*

Source: Census Enumerators' Books1851;Registrar's District Dudley;PRO Microfilm No. HO 1072030

households contained some very complex patterns of kin co-residence, and it is clearly evident that they were much more successful at maintaining these complex family ties, or, of course, were not so successful at breaking the ties of kinship, than were the coalminers, whose pattern of kinship co-residence was much simpler in 1851.

In order to examine this different pattern of kinship co-residence further, a full description of the relationship to the head of the household of all the kin resident in coalminer households in 1851 is presented in Table 5.3, and similar data for the working class in general is presented in Table 5.4. It is perhaps remarkable that out of a coalminer household population of 1221, there were only 46 relatives, 3.8% of the total, resident in these households in 1851. In the working class households in general, there were 152 relatives out of a total sample population of 1388, which represented 11.0%, a figure almost three times as large as that for the coalminer households. Michael Anderson drew particular attention to the large numbers of brothers and sisters, nieces and nephews, and grandchildren with no co-residing parents who were living in the Preston households in 1851 and his data is compared with that for Lower Gornal in 1851 in Table 5.5 below. (4)

Table 5.5 **Proportions of Resident Kin Represented by Brothers and Sisters, Grandchildren without parents, and Nephews and Nieces without parents: Lower Gornal and Preston 1851**

	Lower Gornal Coalminer Households 1851	Lower Gornal Working Class Households 1851	Preston Households 1851 (a)
Brothers and Sisters	11.1%	9.9%	18.9%
Grandchildren without parents co-residing	17.8%	17.8%	13.3%
Nephews/ Nieces without parents co-residing	4.3%	13.8%	15.0%

Notes: (a) This was a 10% sample of all households, although Preston was in 1851 a predominantly a working class town

Sources: Census Enumerators' Books; Registrar's District Dudley; PRO Microfilm No. HO 1072030
M.Anderson, The Family in Nineteenth Century Lancashire, 1971, p.45

There is very little difference between the coalminer and working class households in general in Lower Gornal in the proportions of resident kin represented by both brothers and sisters, and grandchildren without their parents. However, the working class households did have a greater proportion of resident kin consisting of nephews and nieces resident without their parents: 13.8% compared to only 4.3% in the coalminer households. Two significant differences between the Lower Gornal data and that for Preston, however, should be highlighted. The proportion of resident kin represented by both brothers and sisters, and nephews and nieces without parents, was greater in Preston than in Lower Gornal in 1851. On the other hand, however, the coalminer and working-class households in general in Lower Gornal had a bigger proportion of kin consisting of grandchildren without their parents than was the case in Preston.

Unrelated Residents

To complete the analysis of shared households in Lower Gornal in 1851 further attention must be given to those with residents unrelated to the head: those containing lodgers, visitors or servants. There are problems associated with the interpretation of these categories of persons in the Census, especially that of lodger. In 1851 the Enumerators were instructed to schedule separately those persons who paid rent for a distinct part of the house, but there was no guidance about those who did not occupy distinct parts of houses, such as a separate floor or apartment. Thus it would be expected that a lodger would be given a separate schedule and that they would be treated as a head of household in their own right, and that this would appear as such in the Enumerators' Books. (5) This did not happen, however, in Lower Gornal or Cradley in 1851, and lodgers are shown as part of the household of the main occupier of the house, and are described as a 'lodger' in the column for relationship to the head of the household. Thus, were lodgers regarded as separate households, or as part of the co-residing group? Certainly in the small houses in which the majority of these people lived in the Black Country in the second half of the nineteenth century, with common entrances and communal living space, it is difficult to imagine how lodgers can have enjoyed anything even closely resembling separate households. It may be the case, however, that nineteenth century families had great ingenuity in sub-dividing their already small houses into distinct units. Moreover, even if it was difficult to create physically separated households for lodgers, this does not mean that lodgers were not regarded by the family of the main occupier as having a separate identity in some way. It may have been the case that lodgers prepared and cooked their own meals and ate

separately from the main family, although, again, given the physical layout of most nineteenth century working class houses, and the importance of the kitchen as a focal point of the household, it is difficult to imagine how this was accomplished. In reality it may have been the case that lodgers were simply those residents who paid rent to live in a house occupied by another nuclear family with whom they shared communal space and meals. In 1891 an attempt was made to eliminate the ambiguities caused by the loose definition of the term 'lodger', and they were scheduled separately in the Enumerators' Books. (6) Certainly, in Lower Gornal and Cradley in 1891 this seems to have been done fairly consistently, although this administrative alteration would make no difference to the actual relationships which existed in working class households between the main occupying nuclear family and its lodgers. The term 'servant' can also cause problems especially when it also appears in the occupational column, as it did with all the examples in Lower Gornal in 1851. It is impossible to know whether the designation was being used to conceal unconventional relationships, but among the working class of Lower Gornal and Cradley in the nineteenth century they formed a statistically insignificant minority of the total population.

Table 5.6 below attempts to reconstruct the co-residing unrelated population in both coalminer and working class households in general in Lower Gornal in1851. Perhaps the most remarkable feature which emerges from the Table is just how few people were actually co-resident with, but unrelated to, the working class families in Lower Gornal in 1851. It was shown earlier in this Chapter that only 15.2% of the coalminer and 13.2% of the working-class households were shared with persons unrelated to the head of the household. (7) These very small proportions are emphasised even more when translated into numbers of people: in the coalminers households these co-resident but unrelated people only amounted to 57 out of 1221 people, or 4.6% of the total; while in the working class households in general, they only amounted to 51 out of 1388 people, or 3.7% of the total. (8) While such small numbers cannot be overlooked entirely, it would seem reasonable to regard them as statistically insignificant.

There are some quite striking differences between the working-class population of Lower Gornal and that of Preston in 1851 in terms of the number of people co-resident but unrelated to the head of the household. Michael Anderson draws particular attention to the number of lodgers or boarders present in the Preston population in 1851: they were present in 23% of the sample households and accounted for 12% of the total sample population, and were *"scattered widely through the working class section of the population"*. (9) In fact, in what Michael Anderson calls socio-

Table 5.6 **The Structure of the Co-Residing but Unrelated Group in Coalminer and other Working-Class Households: Lower Gornal 1851**

	Coalminer Households								Working Class Households							
	Married		Single		Widowed		Totals		Married		Single		Widowed		Totals	
	N.	%	*N.*	%	*N.*	%	*N.*	%	*N.*	%	*N.*	%	*N.*	%	*N.*	%
Visitors	*6*	10.5	*17*	29.8	*0*	0.0	*23*	40.3	*6*	11.8	*18*	35.3	*0*	0.0	*24*	47.1
Lodgers	*10*	17.5	*17*	29.8	*4*	7.0	*31*	54.3	*4*	7.8	*14*	27.5	*4*	7.8	*22*	43.1
Servants	*0*	0.,0	*3*	5.3	*0*	0.0	*3*	5.3	*0*	0.0	*5*	9.8	*0*	0.0	*5*	9.8
							57	99.9							*51*	100.0

Source: Census Enumerators' Books; Registrar's District Dudley; PRO Microfilm No. HO 1072030

economic group VI, represented by lower factory labour, there were lodgers co-resident in no less than 29% of these households; in socio-economic group V, represented by labourers, there were lodgers co-resident in 24% of these households. Obviously, there is no way of knowing whether the working class of Lower Gornal in 1851 were exactly the same as these groups in Preston, but the comparison is still stark. In Lower Gornal in 1851 lodgers were only present in 8.4% of coalminer households and 6.2% of working class households generally, and accounted for only 2.5% and 1.6% of the total populations respectively of those households. (10) It was not a common pattern of residence in this part of the Black Country to share households with persons not related to the occupying family, whether they were occupied by coalminer families or those of the working class generally.

Attitudes and Relationships within the Household

Although sharing accommodation was not the usual pattern of residence in Lower Gornal in 1851, is it possible to tease from the data patterns which might give clues

about the motives of the families who did share their limited space with other kin and with those unrelated to them? In order to do this, those households in which there was co-residency by more than one nuclear family have been examined in more detail, and an attempt to tabulate this has been made for the coalminer households in Table 5.7, and for the working class sample of households in Table 5.8, both below. It should be pointed out immediately that households with more than one nuclear family sharing were not common, either among those of the coalminers or the working class generally: there were 12 out of the 225 coalminer, or 5.3%; and 27 out of the 258 working-class households, or 10.5%. This difference in the proportion of households with sharing nuclear families reflects the overall differences between the two types of household discussed earlier in this Chapter. Michael Anderson found that in Preston in 1851 as many as a half of all couples lived with kin or as lodgers for the first few years of marriage. (11) The data for the working class of Lower Gornal in 1851 presented in this Thesis does not support this pattern of residence.

Sharing must, presumably, have been seen as necessary or desirable by both families: a response to the need for accommodation by newly migrated families; a solution to temporary housing shortage in particular areas; a response to economic hardship which could be managed by sharing rent; the means of providing mutual services of child minding, perhaps made imperative by the loss of a partner in one or both of the sharing families; or a response to immediate economic or personal crises in families which may have forced individual families to abandon their family home and seek temporary sharing with another family. All of these motives may be regarded as psychologically rational responses by the working class to their life situations in the nineteenth century.

However, there must have been times and circumstances involved in sharing accommodation when it became, at least to the outside observer, irrational, since it caused gross overcrowding of already small houses, over-use of already heavily-burdened and scarce facilities, and a general worsening of living standards for one or both of the sharing families. The sharing of accommodation with families with two or more children in houses already containing a large nuclear family, and perhaps with older parents also co-resident, is an obvious example of such apparent irrational sharing. In such circumstances it would have been expected that the positive gains to be enjoyed from sharing accommodation must surely have been more than negated by the loss of comfort and convenience. If there were examples of this kind of sharing, then two possible interpretations might possibly be made: the working class families involved in this type of sharing were behaving irrationally; or there were other circumstances which overrode any considerations of the irrational use of living space.

Table 5.7 The Structure of Shared Occupancy in Coalminer Households with more than one Nuclear Family: Lower Gornal 1851

	Type of Sharing									
	with solo head or married couple only		with solo head or married couple and 1 other co-resident		with solo head or married couple and 2 other co-residents		with solo heador married couple and more than 2 other co-residents		Totals	
Types of Family	**N**	**%**	**N**	**%**	**N**	**%**	**N**	**%**	**N**	**%**
Lodgers or Visitors										
Married Couples										
no children	1	*16.7*								
1 child							4	*66.7*		
2 children	1	*16.7*								
3 or more children										
	2	*33.3*					4	*66.7*	6	*100.0*
Single Parents (b)										
no children										
1 child										
2 children										
3 or more children										
									6	*100.0*
Kin										
Married Couples										
no children					1	*16.7*				
1 child										
2 children										
3 or more children	1	*16.7*					2	*33.3*		
	1	*16.7*			1	*16.7*	2	*33.3*	4	*66.7*
Single Parents										
no children										
1 child										
2 children							1	*16.7*		
3 or more children			1	*16.7*						
			1	*16.7*			1	*16.7*	2	*33.3*
									6	*100.0*

Notes: (a) these include unmarried and widowed heads
(a) single parents include those unaccompanied by their spouse and widowed parents

Source: Census Enumerators Books 1851: Registrar's District Dudley; PRO Microfilm No 1072030

Table 5.8 The Structure of Shared Occupancy in Working-Class Households with more than one Nuclear Family: Lower Gornal 1851

	Types of sharing: with solo head or married couple only (a)		with solo head or married couple and 1 other co-resident		with solo head or married couple and 2 other co-residents		with solo head or married couple and more than 2 other co-residents		Totals	
Types of Family	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Lodgers or Visitors										
Married Couples										
no children	1	*16.7*			1	*16.7*				
1 child			2	*33.3*						
2 children										
3 or more children	1	*16.7*								
	2	*33.3*	2	*33.3*	1	*16.7*	0	*0.0*	5	*83.3*
Single Parents (b)										
no children										
1 child										
2 children							1	*16.7*		
3 or more children										
							1	*16.7*	1	*16.7*
									6	*100.0*
Kin										
Married Couples										
no children	2	*9.5*	2	*9.5*	1	*4.8*	1	*4.8*		
1 child	1	*4.8*					1	*4.8*		
2 children	1	*4.8*			1	*4.8*	2	*9.5*		
3 or more children	3	*14.3*			1	*4.8*	1	*4.8*		
	7	*33.3*	2	*9.5*	3	*14.3*	5	*23.8*	17	*81.0*
Single Parents										
no children										
1 child					1	*4.8*	2	*9.5*		
2 children										
3 or more children	1	*4.8*								
	1	*4.8*			1	*4.8*	2	*9.5*	4	*19.0*
									21	*100.0*

Notes: (a) these include unmarried and widowed heads
(b) single parents include those unaccompanied by their spouse and widowed parents

Source: Census Enumerators Books 1851: Registrar's District Dudley; PRO Microfilm No 1072030

Almost certainly the motives outlined above impinged with greater degrees of necessity or desirability, depending on whether sharing was with kin or with unrelated families, and the point at which mutual comfort and convenience changed to discomfort and inconvenience would have been different depending on the type of sharing. Where sharing families were related then overwhelming necessity may have been allowed to outweigh or override desirability.

Tables 5.7 and 5.8 attempt to show the degrees of *'aparent'* irrationality in the sharing of households, both by related nuclear families and those apparently unrelated, by showing the different sizes of sharing families against the sizes of households with whom they were sharing. A small family sharing with a small household might be regarded as completely rational, while a large family sharing with an already large household might be regarded as more irrational sharing, and likely to cause the kinds of overcrowding and consequent hardships outlined above. Obviously there were many degrees of overcrowding and hardship betwen these two extremes. The type of accommodation in which these families were sharing is also not known, and therefore it is impossible to know exactly how much impact any consequent overcrowding might have had on the sharing families. The Tables show, in the first place, that the bulk of co-residence was with married couples and their children if they had any. In the working-class households generally this sharing was also predominantly with families of kin rather than unrelated families. Sharing with unrelated single-parent families was non-existent in the coalminer households, and there was only one example in the working-class households. If such families were regarded as economically or emotionally vulnerable, especially those headed by an unaccompanied or widowed mother, then heads would hardly have been acting rationally in allowing their households to be shared with such high-risk families. Where sharing with single-parent families did occur it was, with the one exception already referred to, with related families. Here the risks may have been almost as great as those accompanying unrelated families in the same circumstances, but other considerations, loosely bound up with the notion of the family bond, may have carried more weight in the process of making the decision to share or not. An unaccompanied or widowed coalminer father may have had little alternative but to look to his parents' household as the means of providing care for his children and to service his particular domestic needs arising from the nature of his occupation. Even more at risk, and economically vulnerable particularly, would have been the unaccompanied, deserted, or widowed mother. Unable, perhaps, to support her young family alone, she would have had little alternative but to seek help from parents, who in turn would not really be able to refuse. Thus, although these cases may have led to what an outside observer might

have regarded as irrational sharing, there were, probably, in reality very good reasons why such sharing should have occurred. These suggestions are, of course, conjectural, and the present writer has not discovered any evidence to support them.

Some of the sharing revealed in Tables 5.7 and 5.8 was, indeed, irrational in that, given the prevailing standards of domestic accommodation in Lower Gornal in the mid-nineteenth century, it would have led to some degree of discomfort through overcrowding. There were extremes of fourteen persons sharing one coalminer household, but even here it was a widowed mother and her two children sharing with her relatively young parents who still had nine other children co-resident. On the whole, the evidence from the Census, and presented in the Tables above, would seem to indicate that 6 of the 12 coalminer households with more than one nuclear family were acting with a degree of irrationality in sharing their households as they did since it would, almost certainly, have led to a degree of overcrowding. At face value, there are no obvious reasons why they were sharing, since any advantages which might have been gained must have been at least equalled, and in most cases outweighed, by the disadvantages, in terms of the consequences which must have followed from the levels of overcrowding experienced. Two of these households, however, were being shared with kin and their families, and thus kinship ties might help to explain why such households were sharing as they did. It may have been irrational sharing but the participating families may have had few alternative strategies on which they could rely to prevent possible economic hardship.

The working-class households generally, in which nuclear families were co-resident with others, seemed to have been more successful at avoiding this irrational sharing: of the 27 in which there was such co-residence, 20 would probably fall into the category of rational sharing in that either it would not have led to overcrowded accommodation, or it was with vulnerable kin and their families. Such sharing was consciously and positively chosen as an economically or socially rational course of action at a certain point in time because it provided benefits for one or both of the sharing families, or it was an unavoidable imperative because of the ties of kinship.

The outside observer of working class living conditions in the mid-nineteenth century, whether he was one of the new breed of social investigator spawned in the 1830's and 1840's, or she was one of the army of lady bountiful do-gooders so abundant in Victorian England, or merely a late twentieth century historian seeking to make sense of the rich mysteries of working class life, might describe many working-class attitudes, and much of their behaviour, as irrational. Whatever the origin of these

analyses, from the interfering paternalism of the lady bountiful to the distanced, statistically-supported observation of the historian, they cannot reconstruct what the working class themselves thought of their living conditions, whether they thought of their living space as being overcrowded because they chose to share it with others. Nor can they reconstruct those sets of attitudes which determined their relationships with their kin or those non-relatives with whom they sometimes chose to live. It is very difficult for the historian to reconstruct the content of the contact with either group of co-residents. In particular, how did the working class in the nineteenth century perceive their relationships with other members of the wider family group; did they consider that they were entitled to special treatment just because they were kin? The historian can point to patterns of behaviour and draw his conclusions, but those myriad individual decisions, and their motivations, lying at the root of such observable behaviour must remain elusive in the absence of any corroborative evidence.

The notion that some of the sharing was the almost inevitable consequence of the bonds which existed between kin, especially when such kin were economically or socially vulnerable, has been explored above in connection with households with multiple families. Such families were not the only vulnerable groups within working class society in the second half of the nineteenth century. Much of the sharing was with individuals, both related and unrelated, and it is possible to classify many of the latter as economically or socially vulnerable, and this may in part help to explain the type and patterns of sharing in the households under observation, and may also throw some light on the complex relationships which lie behind these patterns. Tables 5.9 and 5.10 below attempt to present the data showing those individuals who might be classed as vulnerable. The proportion of the total population in coalminer households in 1851 who were co-residents, either kin or unrelated to the head, was 8.4%; and in the working class households the proportion was significantly higher at 14.6%. This difference is characteristic of the greater success of the working class population at maintaining relationships with their kin. This success is reflected in Table 5.10 below which shows that 152 of the 203 co-residents, or 74.9%, were related to the head in some way. In the coalminer households the similar group, 46 of the 103 co-residents, only represented 44.7% of the total. Out of this group of 46 co-resident kin, Table 5.9 shows that 20, or 43.5%, have been classed as economically vulnerable. In the working class households, out of the group of 152 co-resident kin, Table 5.10 shows that 78 of them, or 51.3%, have been similarly classed. A corresponding calculation of the level of vulnerability of the unrelated co-residents, produces figures of 68.4% and 74.5% in the two types of household respectively. These figures show that in both types of household there was a greater degree of vulnerability among the unrelated co-

Table 5.9 The Pattern of Sharing by Age of Vulnerable Persons in Coalminer Households: Lower Gornal 1851

	0–14		15–19		20–29		30–39		40–49		50–59		60+		Totals	
Vulnerable Persons Sharing	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Unrelated																
single males			6	*5.8*	6	*5.8*	2	*1.9*	1	*1.0*	1	*1.0*	2	*1.9*	18	*17.5*
single females	5	*4.9*	6	*5.8*	5	*4.9*	2	*1.9*							18	*17.5*
widowed males							1	*1.0*					1	*1.0*	2	*1.9*
widowed females													1	*1.0*	1	*1.0*
unrelated solo parents (a)															0	*0.0*
children of unrelated solo parents															0	*0.0*
															39	*37.9*
Related																
single brothers/ -in-law	1	*1.0*											1	*1.0*	2	*1.9*
single sisters/ -in-law	1	*1.0*	1	*1.0*	1	*1.0*									3	*2.9*
unaccompanied grandchildren	6	*5.8*	2	*1.9*											8	*7.8*
other unaccompanied relatives	1	*1.0*													1	*1.0*
related solo parents (a)							1	*1.0*	1	*1.0*					2	*1.9*
children of related solo parents	3	*2.9*													3	*2.9*
solo parents of the head (b)															0	*0.0*
widowed parents of head													1	*1.0*	1	*1.0*
															20	*19.4*
Others Sharing																
other unrelated co-residents															18	*17.5*
other co-resident kin															26	*25.2*
Totals	17	*16.5*	15	*14.6*	12	*11.7*	6	*5.8*	2	*1.9*	1	*1.0*	6	*5.8*	103	*100.0*

Notes: (a) unaccompanied by their wives or husbands

(b) mothers/-in-law or fathers/-in-law unaccompanied by their partners

Source: Census Enumerators' Books1851; Registrar's District Dudley; PRO Microfilm No. HO 1072030

Table 5.10 The Pattern of Sharing by Age of Vulnerable Persons in Working-Class Households: Lower Gornal 1851

	0–14		15–19		20–29		30–39		40–49		50–59		60+		Totals	
Vulnerable Persons Sharing	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Unrelated																
single males	3	*1.5*	2	*1.0*	8	*3.9*	2	*1.0*	1	*0.5*					16	*7.9*
single females	7	*3.4*	2	*1.0*	2	*1.0*					1	*0.5*	2	*1.0*	14	*6.9*
widowed males											1	*0.5*			1	*0.5*
widowed females									1	*0.5*			3	*1.5*	4	*2.0*
unrelated solo parents (a)					1	*0.5*									1	*0.5*
children of unrelated solo parents	2	*1.0*													2	*1.0*
															38	*18.7*
Related																
single brothers/ -in-law	1	*0.5*	2	*1.0*			3	*1.5*	1	*0.5*	1	*0.5*			8	*3.9*
single sisters/ -in-law	1	*0.5*			1	*0.5*	2	*1.0*	2	*1.0*	1	*0.5*			7	*3.4*
unaccompanied grandchildren	19	*9.4*	4	*2.0*	4	*2.0*									27	*13.3*
other unaccompanied relatives	13	*6.4*	4	*2.0*	5	*2.5*									22	*10.8*
related solo parents (a)					1	*0.5*	1	*0.5*			2	*1.0*			4	*2.0*
children of related solo parents	5	*2.5*	1	*0.5*	2	*1.0*									8	*3.9*
solo parents of the head (b)									1	*0.5*					1	*0.5*
widowed parents of head													1	*0.5*	1	*0.5*
															78	*38.4*
Others Sharing																
unrelated co-residents															13	*6.4*
co-resident kin															74	*36.5*
Totals	51	*25.1*	15	*7.4*	24	*11.8*	8	*3.9*	6	*3.0*	6	*3.0*	6	*3.0*	203	*100.0*

Notes: (a) unaccompanied by their wives or husbands

(b) mothers/-in-law or fathers/-in-law unaccompanied by their partners

Source: Census Enumerators' Books1851; Registrar's District Dudley; PRO Microfilm No. HO 1072030

residents compared to the co-resident kin; but that in the coalminer households compared to the working class households generally, there was a slightly lower level of vulnerability among both the related and unrelated co-residents.

However, despite these differences in the levels of vulnerability of the co-residents, the basic structural difference in the relational status of the co-residents in the two types of household, especially the relatively small proportion of unrelated co-residents in the working class households generally, has tended to smooth out the differences between the two types of household. Thus, although vulnerability was high amongst unrelated co-residents in working class households, this has not affected overall level of vulnerability in these houeholds because they contained so few of this type of co-resident. In the coalminer households the higher proportion of unrelated co-residents and the higher level of vulnerability amongst this group has inflated the overall level of vulnerability. Consequently, the overall proportion of co-residents who might be classed as vulnerable is very close in both, at 57.3% and 57.1% in the coalminer and working class households respectively, as can be clearly seen in Tables 5.9 and 5.10. If these figures are viewed from another angle, it might tentatively be suggested that kinship status, as a determining factor in the level of co-residency experienced by any socio-economic group, can be exaggerated; and that other factors, associated mostly with economic need, both on the part of the co-residents and the sharing family, may have exerted equally compelling pressure on households to share accommodation. Certainly, the coalminers of Lower Gornal, unable to share with kin as successfully as their working class counterparts in 1851, were not deterred from sharing their accommodation with vulnerable individuals to whom they were unrelated, and the reasons for this lay, possibly, in the mutual economic advantages of doing so.

The analysis can be taken further by examining in more detail some of the categories of person classed as vulnerable. All of the categories of sharing persons shown in the Tables below might be regarded as socially or economically vulnerable in some way. Obviously these categories of persons vary in the degree to which they were vulnerable to changes in life situations. Three suggestions might be put forward to illustrate these degrees of vulnerability. In the first place there was a gender divide. Females were at greater risk of economic destitution than males since it was easier for men and boys to find work than it was for their female counterparts. Females might have found it more difficult to rent adequate and secure accommodation than male counterparts and therefore for such women their only recourse was to seek shelter with their kin. In the second place vulnerability seems to have been a function of marital status, with single

people at greater risk than married, and this is not difficult to understand in an economic system where the whole family income was so important to the survival of the family since most individual family members had such insecure employment. It may have been difficult in areas dependent on economically variable industries like coal and iron for individuals to survive alone. Economic survival was made possible by co-operation in a family unit or with the support of family members. In the third place there was an age factor, vulnerability being a function of extremes of age. The economic vulnerability of the very young and very old in the nineteenth century is fairly easy to understand in a society which relied on the elementary, and often brutal, social security of the workhouse to provide for these marginal groups of people.

These three factors of gender, marital status and age might combine in different ways to vary the extent of any individual's economic vulnerability. For those who had lost their partners and who were too old to work there may have been, perhaps, no alternative but to seek accommodation with their offspring, whatever the level of inconvenience and discomfort involved in such sharing. For the young widowed or unaccompanied mother with young children, again, there may have been few acceptable alternatives to sharing with parents or siblings. For the single male adult, sharing may only have been a temporary expedient necessitated by the demands of his work, and thus a result of a fairly low level of economic vulnerability. For the single female adult, however, unlikely to become an economically viable unit in her own right, and therefore with a greater degree of vulnerability, sharing was an acceptable and rational response. For relatives like nephews and nieces, sharing the accommodation of uncles and aunts unaccompanied by their own parents, it may have resulted from crises within their own families requiring purely temporary sharing arrangements within their wider group of kin. Their vulnerability may have been great for a short period of time, but it was unlikely to last indefinitely. Other nephews and nieces may have been sharing because they had been abandoned by or had lost one or both of their parents. In such cases their vulnerability was likely to be longer lasting. Social vulnerability might also have arisen from the fact that it was not normal in working-class society in the second half of the nineteenth century for individuals to live alone. Michael Anderson in his study of Preston society in 1851 noted that there were *"proper"* forms of residence for the middle class. (12) It may be that there were similar norms of residence in working-class society. Such individuals, therefore, like perhaps many of the brothers and sisters living with siblings, may have been forced into this pattern of sharing by the social norms prevailing in the society in which they lived and worked, although it must be admitted that their economic vulnerability as

individuals seems a more likely reason for the absence of solo occupation in working-class society.

Table 5.9 shows that there were in 1851 some 59 individuals sharing accommodation with coalminer families who might in some way be regarded as socially or economically vulnerable. It is suggested here that their decisions to choose particular patterns of residence were, in part at least, determined by their life situations, and that for some groups these situations carried so many risks of economic destitution, that there were few alternatives, if any. Two groups among these categories of vulnerable people need comment: the young aged 0-19, and widowed people, both those sharing with kin and those sharing as lodgers. A third group, also with a high level of vulnerability, consisting of solo parents and their children has already been discussed in some detail earlier in this Chapter.

In the coalminer households the group of young people under twenty accounted for 31.1% of all those sharing in 1851, while in the working class households generally, it accounted for 32.5%. In other words, almost one in three of all those sharing accommodation with the working class were young people. It must be remembered, however, that these young people do form a very small proportion of the total population under twenty being examined: 4.7% and 8.5% in coalminer and working class households respectively. The significance of this pattern of sharing hardly lies in its overall volume but rather in the differences between the two types of household, with almost twice as many young people proportionally sharing working class households generally compared to coalminer households.

In the coalminer households 15 out of the 32, or 46.9%, of the co-resident young people under twenty, classed as vulnerable because they are unaccompanied by parents, were related to the head, while the rest were lodgers or visitors. In the working class households the pattern of sharing was somewhat different with 49 out of the 66, or 74.2%, of the young people being related to the head. This accords with the notion put forward earlier that the working class generally in Lower Gornal in the mid-nineteenth century were more successful at maintaining relationships with kin than were the coalminers when looked at as a separate working class group. The coalminer population was under-represented in the older age groups and this may help to explain why fewer of these vulnerable young people were sharing with their kin: they simply did not have older kin alive with whom they could share. Alternatively, they may have left parents and older relatives behind when they in-migrated, or their parents and older relatives might themselves have out-migrated, leaving behind their younger family

members. This alternative, however, would seem unlikely given the relative stability of the working-class community and the lower level of in-migration in Lower Gornal in the nineteenth century, although the degree of out-migration, of course, cannot be estimated. The relatively higher proportion of young people living in coalminer households as lodgers is difficult to explain: the motivation of the young people in seeking accommodation with strangers can be understood in terms of the loss of parents; but it is harder to understand why coalminer households were willing to share their sparse accomodation with unrelated young people, unless they were regarded as an economic asset. Of the 17 young people co-resident in coalminer households, but unrelated to the head, 10 of these were working, and it would not be unreasonable to assume that these young people were regarded as an asset rather than an unwelcome burden. Only two of the girls over 14 were not working and it could be suggested that their economic value to the household as a whole lay in the services they provided for the wife of the head in the form of general household duties, and in particular, child-minding.

Particular attention should be drawn to one group within the broader group of young people under twenty, and that is the relatively large number of grandchildren living with grandparents but unaccompanied by their own parents: 7.8% and 11.3% of those sharing in coalminer and working-class households respectively. The particular reasons for this particular pattern of sharing by a very vulnerable group of young people in Lower Gornal in 1851 cannot, of course, be reconstructed. They may have been abandoned by or lost their parents; their co-residence may only have been a temporary response to an immediate economic hardship being experienced by their immediate family. In such circumstances sharing accommodation with grandparents, the bulk of whose immediate families had left the parental home, seems to be an entirely rational use of scarce accommodation. Moreover, the high incidence of this type of co-residence would seem to indicate that contacts with kin were important in working- class society in the second half of the nineteenth century. It would also seem, again, from the greater incidence of this type of co-residence in working class households, that the working class generally, excluding the coalminers, were more successful at maintaining these relationships. Alternatively, of course, the relatively young coalminer population had simply, by 1851, not yet had time to produce the level of generational depth which would have created substantial numbers of families with grandchildren. The general absence of old people in the coalminer population was noted in the analysis of the age structure of the Lower Gornal community in chapter three.

Another group of vulnerable people for whom co-residence with other families was important was that of unaccompanied married people or widowed persons generally, although the proportions, 3.9% of those co-resident in coalminer, and 3.5% of those in working-class households generally, was not significant in 1851. Moreover, the proportion of solo or widowed parents co-resident with their offspring was even smaller, at 1.0%, in both coalminer and working-class households generally. It would seem that for the whole working-class community, including the coalminers, it was difficult to maintain these types of kin relationships, and yet for solo parents or widowed people, possibly struggling to maintain their economic viability, such relationships were of crucial importance. Migration would seem to be fairly easily dismissed as a causal factor, although, again, levels of out-migration are not known and families may have been separated and unable to maintain contact because of this. It is more likely, however, that mortality levels in the working-class community in the half century leading to 1851 were at the root of both the small numbers of parents seeking shelter with offspring, and of widowed people generally lodging with unrelated families.

Lower Gornal 1891

The Pattern of Residence

Table 5.11 below shows the pattern of residence in both coalminer and other working class households in Lower Gornal in 1891. This Table shows some slight modification from that showing the same data in 1851 due to the change, referred to above, in the way in which those people co-resident but unrelated to the head were scheduled in 1891. This change resulted in some households being recorded in the Enumerators' Books in which there were two co-residing heads, occasionally shared also with kin and other lodgers and visitors. In 1851 these co-residing heads and their families would presumably have been classed as lodgers or boarders. In Table 5.11 and the discussion in the text these households are referred to as dual-head households. The problem of interpreting exactly what was meant by lodging in the second half of the nineteenth century remains for the historian, whether he is examining the data for 1891 or 1851. The recording of the father of a co-residing family as a second head of household does not simplify the interpretation since it gives no information about the nature of the social relationship which existed between the two co-residing families. Was the shared occupancy a permanent or semi-permanent social arrangement, arising

perhaps from a need to share the rent, or other mutual needs; or was it a temporary expedient used by families to manage their fragile economic existence in the short term? A small clue to interpreting the data on shared occupancy may lie in the recording of the number of rooms available for occupancy for in some of the dual-head households the total number of rooms available is divided into two, presumably to indicate some element of separate occupancy in terms of social relationship, and, again, it is not difficult to imagine what this was like in physical terms, given the overall smallness of the houses being shared, and the fact that, with one exception, they were all four-roomed houses being sub-divided into two separate two-roomed houses. This exception to the normal sub-division is worthy of comment since it involved the division of a six-roomed house into separate four- and two-roomed occupancy. The number of rooms in a house did not have to be recorded unless it was less than five, but the head of this particular household obviously considered his house to be clearly divided into a separate four and two roomed household. This was, of course, exceptional. This sub-division of the physical space available for occupancy occurred in only 10 out of the 23 coalminer households, and in 6 of the 7 other working class households, in which there was a dual head recorded.

As in 1851, the pattern of residence in 1891 was predominantly that of nuclear families of married couples or parents with their unmarried children, with 74.6% of the coalminer and 70.6% of the working class households generally falling into this category. For the coalminer households this shows a slight fall compared to 1851 when 79.6% of the households were in this category; on the other hand, for the working-class households generally, there had been a slight rise by 1891 from the figure of 67.1% in 1851. (13) The fall in the proportion of coalminer households containing only nuclear families can be accounted for by the corresponding increase in the number of households with kin: from 7.1% in 1851 to 12.3% in 1891. In the working class households there had been little change from 21.7% in 1851 to 20.1% in 1891. (14) In 1891 the working class generally in Lower Gornal were still more likely to share their households with kin than were the coalminers, although the difference was not so great as it had been in 1851.

If these households are again translated into numbers of people then the familial nature of working class society emerges very strongly, as it did in 1851. Of the 2752 persons resident in coalminer households, only 0.07% were heads living alone or with persons not related to them; 4.6% lived either as solo servants or lodgers unrelated to anyone in the households in which they lived; while the remainder of the coalminer

Table 5.11 The Pattern of Household Residence in Coalminer and other Working-Class Households: Lower Gornal 1891

		Coalminer Households		Other Working Class Households	
		N	%	N	%
One nuclear family only	(a)	365	*74.6*	154	*70.6*
Other kin only		56	*11.5*	40	*18.3*
Other kin and other occupants unrelated to the head		4 (b)	*0.8*	4 (c)	*1.8*
Dual Heads and their families	(d)	18	*3.7*	5	*2.3*
Lodgers/Boarders only		31	*6.3*	6	*2.8*
Visitors only	(e)	10	*2.0*	4	*1.8*
Servants only	(f)	3	*0.6*	2	*0.9*
Other combinations of co-residency		2 (g)	*0.4*	3 (h)	*1.4*
Totals		**489**	***99.9***	**218**	***99.9***

Notes:
(a) These households consist of single or widowed heads, married couples, and married couples with unmarried children
(b) This category consisted of 1 household shared with a visitor
3 households shared with dual heads and their families
(c) This category consisted of 2 households shared with lodgers
2 households shared with dual heads and their families
(d) These were households with two Heads recorded as co-resident
(e) These are assumed to be unrelated to the Head, but many were probably related to the wife of the Head whose surname is not known
(f) Households with no other persons except servants lodging
(g) This category consisted of 1 household shared with a dual head and his family, and another visitor
1 household shared with a dual head and his family, and a lodger
(h) This category consisted of 2 households shared with both a lodger and a visitor
1 household shared with both a lodger and a servant

Source: Census Enumerators' Books 1891; Registrar's District Dudley; PRO Microfiche 12/2291 and 12/2292

population, 95.3%, lived in households in which there were people related to them by blood or marriage. The picture is little different for among the working class generally where, of the 1079 persons resident in the sample households, 0.6% headed households alone or with unrelated persons; only 4.5% were solo servants or unrelated lodgers; while the remainder, 94.9% of the working class population, lived with persons related to them by blood or marriage. As in 1851, it is more than likely that

some of these persons recorded as lodgers in both types of household were, in fact, related to the household head in some way. Working-class society in Lower Gornal was indeed familial in 1891, as it had been in 1851, although the tiny minority of persons not living with family or kin had increased from 2% in 1851 to around 5% in 1891.

The Extended Family

If working-class society was familial, then what was the pattern of the kinship within these households in 1891? Table 5.12 below presents the data for the extended families of both coalminer heads and those of the working class sample.

If this Table is compared with Table 5.2 earlier in the Chapter, then it can clearly be seen that there had been very little change in the family relationships in working class homes by 1891. Married couples and parents with their unmarried children still represent the predominant relationship in these households, with 86.9% of the coalminer and 77.5% of the working-class households falling into this category. Of course some of these households were also shared with visitors and lodgers, and this pattern of relationships will be discussed later. In comparing 1851 and 1891, two features of the the coalminer family relationships, perhaps of some significance, would seem to be worthy of comment. In the first place, there had been a slight fall from the high figure of 92.4% in the proportion of households consisting of simple nuclear families of either married couples or parents with their unmarried children, although this category of relationships was still greater among the coalminer households than the working class in general in 1891. In the second place, the last category of relationships in the Table, representing a wide variety and sometimes very complex collection of relationships between family members and the head, had more than doubled between 1851 and 1891, from 3.6% to 9.2%. This category was, however, still smaller than that amongst the working class generally where it represented 12.8% of the households. It could be tentatively suggested that the coalminers were more successful by 1891 at maintaining these complex relationships than they had been in 1851. The process of *'normalising'* the coalminer population, to conform to those working class norms prevalent in the community in which they lived, has been referred to many times in this Thesis, and it is, perhaps, possible to see it at work here. Lower Gornal was a settled and relatively stable community in the second half of the nineteenth century, and this probably had an impact on the coalminer population, enabling kin relationships to be maintained more successfully, in terms of their

Table 5.12 Structure of the Families of Coalminer and other Working-Class Heads of Household: Lower Gornal 1891

	Coalminer Households			Other working class households		
	N	%		N	%	
Solo head, or sharing with unrelated persons	4	0.8	0.8	6	2.8	2.8
Married couple only	18	3.7		15	6.9	
Married couple or widowed person with unmarried children	407	83.2	86.9	154	70.6	77.5
Married couple or widowed person with married children	1	0.2		1	0.5	
Married couple or widowed person with both unmarried and married children	3	0.6		0	0.0	
Married couple or widowed person with married children and grandchildren	4	0.8		10	4.6	
Married couple or widowed person with unmarried children, married children and grandchildren	3	0.6		0	0.0	
Married couple or widowed person with grandchildren	4	0.8	3.0	4	1.8	6.9
Other combinations of relatives	45	9.2	9.2	28	12.8	12.8
Totals	**489**	**99.9**	**99.9**	**218**	**100.0**	**100.0**

Source: Census Enumerators' Books 1891; Registrar's District Dudley; PRO Microfiche 12/2291 and 12/2292

duration and complexity.

The nature of the relationship between kin can be seen clearly in Tables 5.13 and 5.14 below which detail the relationships of family members to the heads of the households both in coalminer and working class homes generally. The number of relatives co-resident in coalminer households was still very small in 1891: only 110 out of a coalminer population of 2757 people, or 4.0% of the total. This represented a small increase on the figure of 3.7% for 1851, but hardly marking any great significant

Table 5.13 Relationship of Kin by Age to the Head of Coalminer Households: Lower Gornal 1891

	0–14		15–19		20–24		25–29		30–39		40–49		50–59		60+		Totals	
	N	*%*	*N*	*%*	*N*	*%*	*N*	*%*	*N*	*%*	*N*	*%*	*N*	*%*	*N*	*%*	*N*	*%*
Father/Father-in-law															6	*5.5*	6	*5.5*
Mother/Mother-in-law													2	*1.8*	10	*9.1*	12	*10.9*
Married/Widowed Son					1	*0.9*	1	*0.9*	2	*1.8*	1	*0.9*					5	*4.5*
Married/Widowed Daughter			4	*3.6*	4	*3.6*							1	*0.9*			9	*8.2*
Brother	3	*2.7*							2	*1.8*	1	*0.9*					6	*5.5*
Sister	1	*0.9*	1	*0.9*			1	*0.9*	2	*1.8*			1	*0.9*	1	*0.9*	7	*6.4*
Nephew/Neice with parent																	0	*0.0*
Nephew/Neice without parent	3	*2.7*	1	*0.9*			1	*0.9*									5	*4.5*
Grandchild with parent	17	*15.5*	4	*3.6*													21	*19.1*
Grandchild without parent	13	*11.8*	4	*3.6*													17	*15.5*
Son-in-law					3	*2.7*			1	*0.9*							4	*3.6*
Daughter-in-law			1	*0.9*			2	*1.8*			1	*0.9*					4	*3.6*
Stepson	1	*0.9*			1	*0.9*											2	*1.8*
Stepdaughter	1	*0.9*															1	*0.9*
Brother-in-law			2	*1.8*	1	*0.9*	1	*0.9*									4	*3.6*
Sister-in-law	1	*0.9*					1	*0.9*									2	*1.8*
Aunt															2	*1.8*	2	*1.8*
Grandmother															2	*1.8*	2	*1.8*
Relative													1	*0.9*			1	*0.9*
Totals	39	*35.5*	17	*15.5*	10	*9.1*	6	*5.5*	7	*6.4*	3	*2.7*	4	*3.6*	17	*15.5*	110	*100.0*

Source: Census Enumerators' Books1891; Registrar's District Dudley; PRO Microfiche 12/2291 and 12/2292

Table 5.14 **Relationship of Kin by Age to the Head of Working Class Households: Lower Gornal 1891**

	0--14		15--19		20--24		25--29		30--39		40--49		50--59		60+		Totals	
	N	*%*	*N*	*%*	*N*	*%*	*N*	*%*	*N*	*%*	*N*	*%*	*N*	*%*	*N*	*%*	*N*	*%*
Father/Father-in-law															2	*2.0*	2	*2.0*
Mother/Mother-in-law															10	*10.0*	10	*10.0*
Married/Widowed Son					2	*2.0*	2	*2.0*									4	*4.0*
Married/Widowed Daughter					1	*1.0*	2	*2.0*	3	*3.0*	2	*2.0*	1	*1.0*			9	*9.0*
Brother	3	*3.0*	1	*1.0*	1	*1.0*			1	*1.0*							6	*6.0*
Sister	1	*1.0*	1	*1.0*	2	*2.0*	1	*1.0*			2	*2.0*	1	*1.0*	1	*1.0*	9	*9.0*
Nephew/Neice with parent			1														1	*0.0*
Nephew/Neice without parent	3	*3.0*	1	*1.0*	2	*2.0*			1	*1.0*							7	*7.0*
Grandchild with parent	19	*19.0*	4	*4.0*													23	*23.0*
Grandchild without parent	9	*9.0*	2	*2.0*	1	*1.0*											12	*12.0*
Son-in-law					1	*1.0*	2	*2.0*	1	*1.0*	3	*3.0*					7	*7.0*
Daughter-in-law					2	*2.0*	1	*1.0*									3	*3.0*
Sister-in-law									1	*1.0*	1	*1.0*					2	*2.0*
Relative	2	*2.0*			1	*1.0*									2	*2.0*	5	*5.0*
Totals	35	*35.0*	10	*9.0*	12	*12.0*	8	*8.0*	6	*6.0*	7	*7.0*	2	*2.0*	13	*13.0*	100	*99.0*

Source: Census Enumerators' Books1891; Registrar's District Dudley; PRO Microfiche 12/2291 and 12/2292

change in nature of family relationships in the late nineteenth century. The proportion of kin in working class households generally, 100 out of a sample population of 1079, had fallen by 1891 to 9.2% from 11.0% in 1851, but this figure is still more than twice that of the coalminer kin. (15) In both types of household the biggest category of kin, representing over one in three of all kin, was that of grandchildren, both those with their parents also co-resident, and those unaccompanied by parents. This was also a feature of both types of household in 1851, and there had been little change by 1891.

Perhaps two points of significance may be drawn from a comparison of the coalminer kin in 1851 and 1891. In the first place, the coalminers in 1891 seemed to be more successful at maintaining relationships, at least in terms of co-residency, with their parents, a feature also shared with the rest of the working class in general. In 1851 there was only one parent living with a coalminer head, representing 2.2% of the kin, whereas in 1891 there were 18 parents of heads out of the total of 110 kin, representing 16.4% of the total. (16) In the second place, there was, to a certain extent, a greater degree of complexity in the relationships maintained successfully in 1891. The coalminer households contained a wider variety of kin in 1891 compared to 1851, with greater numbers of more unusual co-resident relatives, like unaccompanied nephews and nieces, brothers and sisters, aunts and grandparents.

Many other factors, of course, may have been influential in determining the degree of success at maintaining relationships with parents and other relatives. Parents may have been living longer by 1891, an economic burden for longer, and thus presenting their children with problems of accomodation which did not have to be faced by the children of 1851, when life expectancy was shorter. The greater incidence of older parents who were co-resident with their children may have been nothing more than a simple reflection of economic realities, which forced the old to live with their offspring since the alternative was the workhouse. On the other hand, it may have been a reflection of the growing economic prosperity of the working class in the late nineteenth century, which enabled them to support parents by sharing accommodation with them. As families grew in size in the late nineteenth century, lodging some of these with brothers and sisters who had spare accomodation may have been a very practical and economically rational solution to the problem: releasing over-burdened space in one home and providing perhaps small amounts of income in others. It is very difficult for the historian to measure the degree of choice present in the maintenance of these kinship relationships: were they welcomed positively, were they a more or less grudging acquiescence to prevailing cultural norms, or were they merely a necessity? The greater number and growing complexity of these relationships may have reflected

greater success in their maintenance, but it is not easy to establish the degree to which it was a welcomed success, or, indeed, why it only operated for some households?

Unrelated Residents

To complete this analysis of shared households in Lower Gornal in 1891 it is necessary, again, to examine those with residents unrelated to the head, those containing lodgers, visitors, dual heads and their families, or servants. (17) In 1891 some of the unrelated co-residents were described as *'boarders'* in a few cases, and these have been classified here as lodgers for the purposes of analysis. It is, of course, possible that these co-residents described as boarders enjoyed a different relationship to the head of the household and their families than did those described as lodgers. The head may have been wishing to indicate that such persons and their families lived completely separately from the main family in the house: not only renting space within the house but also enjoying their own facilities within the shared house. It is, of course, impossible for the historian to reconstruct the exact nature of these relationships, but the practical problems involved in regarding any co-residents as having a completely separate existence within shared accommodation in Lower Gornal have been discussed earlier. Table 5.15 attempts to reconstruct the co-residing unrelated population in both coalminer and working-class households in general in Lower Gornal in 1891.

It was shown earlier that only 13.4% of the coalminer and 9.6% of the working class households were shared with persons unrelated to the head of the household, and these figures show that a smaller proportion of households in 1891 were sharing with unrelated people than was the case in 1851. (18) These very small proportions are emphasised even more when translated into numbers of people: in coalminer households these unrelated co-resident people only amounted to 146 out of 2757 people, or 5.3% of the total population; while in the working class households in general, they only amounted to 56 out of 1079 people, or 5.2% of the sample population. Thus in 1891, while fewer households proportionally had unrelated co-residents, each of those that were sharing, on average, had a greater number of such people in their households, especially among those of the working class in general. These numbers reinforce the conclusion drawn earlier in the Chapter that shared occupancy with unrelated people was not a common pattern of residence in this part of the Black Country in the second half of the nineteenth century.

Table 5.15 **The Structure of the Co-Residing but Unrelated Group in Coalminer and other Working-Class Households: Lower Gornal 1891**

	Coalminer Households								Working Class Households							
	Married		Single		Widowed		Totals		Married		Single		Widowed		Totals	
	N.	%	N.	%	N.	%	N.	%	N.	%	N.	%	N.	%	N.	%
Visitors (a)	*1*	0.7	*12*	8.2	*6*	4.1	*19*	13.0	*1*	1.8	*6*	10.7	*1*	1.8	*8*	14.3
Lodgers	*5*	3.4	*33*	22.6	*8*	5.5	*46*	31.5	*4*	7.1	*11*	19.6	*1*	1.8	*16*	28.6
Dual House-holds (b)	*44*	30.1	*32*	21.9	*1*	0.7	*77*	52.7	*14*	25.0	*15*	26.8	*0*	0.0	*29*	51.8
Servants	0	0.0	2	1.4	2	1.4	*4*	2.7	0	0.0	3	5.4	0	0.0	*3*	5.4
Totals							146	99.9							*56*	100.1

Notes: (a) It is, of course, possible that many of these were in fact related to the head but werenot recorded as such in the Census
(b) This category is defined in the text

Source: Census Enumerators' Books 1891; Registrar's District Dudley; PRO Microfiche 12/2291 and 12/2292

Interestingly, the structure of this group of co-residents, who have been considered as unrelated to the head of the household in which they live, had changed in 1891 when compared to 1851. The most significant change is in the proportion of lodgers who form part of this larger group of unrelated co-residents. In 1851 the group of lodgers made up approximately half of the total number of unrelated co-residents in both coalminer and working class households generally: 54.3% and 43.1% respectively. In 1891 lodgers, including the families of dual heads, were a more significant group within the larger group of unrelated co-residents, amounting to 84.2% and 80.4% in coalminer and working-class households respectively. In both types of household there had been a corresponding fall in the proportion of co-resident visitors in 1891. This could, of course, be due to the nature of the Census as a snapshot of the population, in that visitors are, by their very nature, a transient element in the population, whose number might vary widely from week to week, and there is a certain element of chance as to whether they are captured by a Census or not. If

Census day had corresponded with a holiday in 1851, then this might account for the larger number of visitors, but certainly there was little difference in the overall timing of the two Censuses, being on Sunday March 30th, and Sunday April 5th respectively. (19) However, even if it is accepted that lodgers did form a slightly larger group in 1891 than they did in 1851, they were still hardly a significant group, either in size or in the number of households they occupied.

Attitudes and Relationships within the Household

Although shared accommodation was not the common residential norm in Lower Gornal in 1891, just as in 1851, is it possible to tease from the data any patterns which might give clues about the motives of the families who did share their limited space with other kin and with those unrelated to them, and were these patterns different to those which were present in 1851? In order to do this, those households in which there was co-residency by more than one nuclear family have been examined in more detail, and an attempt to tabulate this has been made for the coalminer households in Table 5.16, and for the working-class sample of households in Table 5.17. It must be pointed out again that households with more than one nuclear family sharing were not common, either among those of the coalminers or the working class generally: there were 41 out of the 489 coalminer, or 8.4%; and 25 out of the 218 working class households, or 11.5%, but these figures do show and increase when compared to Lower Gornal in 1851, when only 5.3% and 10.5% of households respectively were shared in this way. (20) This increase could hardly be described as significant.

One notion which can be dismissed relatively easily is that the working class were sharing with other nuclear families when they lived in larger houses: in other words, that it was a rational use of space not required by the main nuclear family. The houses in which there was sharing by more than one family consisted overwhelmingly of four- and three-roomed accommodation. Only 4 of the 42 coalminer houses, and none of the working class sample, shared by more than one family consisted of more than four rooms. It was simply not true that the working class used what might have been considered as *'superfluous'* accomodation to house other families: in Lower Gornal in 1891 there was little superfluous accomodation available, the majority of houses being of four or less rooms. There was no correlation between the amount of accommodation available to a family and the incidence of sharing with other families. In many of the houses shared by two or more families in 1891 there is a clear indication in the Census record that the house had been divided into two in some way,

Table 5.16 The Structure of Shared Occupancy in Coalminer Households with more than one Nuclear Family: Lower Gornal 1891

	Types of Sharing									
	with solo head or married couple only (a)		with solo head or married couple and 1 other co-resident		with solo head or married couple and 2 other co-residents		with solo head or married couple and more than 2 other co-residents		Totals	
Types of Family	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Lodgers or Visitors										
Married Couples										
no children	2	*7.4*	5	*18.5*	2	*7.4*	2	*7.4*		
1 child	1	*3.7*			1	*3.7*	1	*3.7*		
2 children	2	*7.4*	1	*3.7*			2	*7.4*		
3 or more children	2	*7.4*	3	*11.1*						
	7	*25.9*	9	*33.3*	3	*11.1*	5	*18.5*	24	*88.9*
Single Parents (b)										
no children										
1 child							2	*7.4*		
2 children										
3 or more children	1	*3.7*								
	1	*3.7*					2	*7.4*	3	*11.1*
									27	***100.0***
Kin										
Married Couples										
no children	1	*7.1*					2	*14.3*		
1 child					1	*7.1*	1	*7.1*		
2 children	1	*7.1*								
3 or more children	1	*7.1*	1	*7.1*						
	3	*21.4*	1	*7.1*	1	*7.1*	3	*21.4*	8	*57.1*
Single Parents										
no children					1	*7.1*				
1 child			1	*7.1*	1	*7.1*	2	*14.3*		
2 children										
3 or more children							1	*7.1*		
			1	*7.1*	2	*14.3*	3	*21.4*	6	*42.9*
									14	***100.0***

Notes: (a) these include unmarried and widowed heads
(b) single parents include those unaccompanied by their spouse and widowed parents

Source: Census Enumerators Books 1891: Registrar's District Dudley; PRO Microfiche 12/2291 and 12/2292

Table 5.17 The Structure of Shared Occupancy in Working-Class Households with more than one Nuclear Family: Lower Gornal 1891

	Types of Sharing									
	with solo head or married couple only (a)		with solo head or married couple and 1 other co-resident		with solo head or married couple and 2 other co-residents		with solo head or married-ied couple and more than 2 other co-residents		Totals	
Types of Family	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Lodgers or Visitors										
Married Couples										
no children							1	*9.1*		
1 child	1	*9.1*					3	*27.3*		
2 children	1	*9.1*	1	*9.1*			1	*9.1*		
3 or more children			1	*9.1*	1	*9.1*				
	2	*18.2*	2	*18.2*	1	*9.1*	5	*45.5*	10	*90.9*
Single Parents (b)										
no children										
1 child										
2 children							1	*9.1*		
3 or more children										
			0	*0.0*			1	*9.1*	1	*9.1*
									11	*100.0*
Kin										
Married Couples										
no children	1	*7.1*			1	*7.1*				
1 child	3	*21.4*					1	*7.1*		
2 children	1	*7.1*								
3 or more children	2	*14.3*								
	7	*50.0*			1	*7.1*	1	*7.1*	9	*64.3*
Single Parents										
no children										
1 child	1	*7.1*					1	*7.1*		
2 children	1	*7.1*	1	*7.1*						
3 or more children	1	*7.1*								
	3	*21.4*	1	*7.1*	0	*0.0*	1	*7.1*	5	*35.7*
									14	*100.0*

Notes: (a) these include unmarr-ied and widowed heads
(b) single parents include those unaccompanied by their spouse and widowed parents

Source: Census Enumerators Books 1891: Registrar's District Dudley; PRO Microfiche 12/2291 and 12/2292

usually with the available accommodation shown as two-plus-two rooms. Such division of already cramped accommodation must have placed enormous constraints on family life.

There was in 1891 in the coalminer households a greater degree of sharing with unrelated solo parents and their families than there had been in 1851; but again, the main category of sharing family was that of married couples either alone or with their children, some 32 out of 42 households with more than one family being shared in this way. Some of this sharing with married couples and their children was apparently irrational in that it must have caused severe overcrowding of the acccommodation available in the house: perhaps 13 of the 32 examples would fit into this category as having at least 7 people resident in the house, and some far more than this. However, the bulk of this multiple family sharing, where it led to no more than 7 persons sharing the accommodation, might be regarded as a rational use of space in response to the urgent, and perhaps only temporary, economic needs of the sharing families.

The greater degree of sharing with unrelated solo parents and their families has already been mentioned above, and the risks involved in this kind of sharing, especially when it was with solo mothers and their children, have been discussed earlier in the Chapter, but its significance must not be exaggerated since there were still only 3 coalminer households being shared in this way in 1891. It is now impossible for the historian to reconstruct the reasons why this type of sharing was entered into, and it will therefore be classed as irrational, since in all three examples shown in Table 5.17 it probably led to overcrowding in the households concerned. Of the 6 cases of sharing with solo kin and their families shown in the table, 3 might have caused serious overcrowding of the accommodation, but, again, such sharing with kin might be explained in terms of a rationality outside that of the purely economic considerations of mutual advantage: families may have shared with their own for no other reasons but the invisible ties which exist between parents and children, and between siblings. Sharing with parents or with brothers and sisters may have been the only course of action open to solo mothers with young families and no obvious means of support. The child-minding facilities which could easily be supplied in the parental or sibling household may have enabled such vulnerable mothers, at least in some small way, to support their families with paid employment. It must not be forgotten that, for many solo mothers with a young family, the alternative to returning to the family home was the workhouse.

These patterns of sharing in coalminer households can also be seen in the sample of other working-class households. Only one household was being shared with an

unrelated solo parent and child, and the bulk of the sharing was with married couples either alone or with their children. In 1851 the working class generally had managed more successfully than the coalminers to avoid the kind of irrational sharing which may have led to overcrowding, but Table 5.17 shows that in 1891 they were less successful than their coalminer counterparts at avoiding this. As many as 8 of the 11 households being shared with unrelated families had more than 7 persons resident in them; and at least 3 of the 14 households shared with kin were in a similar situation. It may, of course, be the smallness of the sample which has skewed the data and led to this difference in 1891. It is impossible to reconstruct the motives which lay behind this seemingly irrational sharing by the working class in 1891. However, it does seem that in the majority of the cases of multiple family sharing, both in coalminer and working-class households generally, it did not lead to overcrowded accommodation, and therefore such sharing might be regarded as a rational response to the economic necessities being experienced by one or both of the sharing families.

The notion that much of the co-residency of individuals in both coalminer and working class households generally resulted from their economic vulnerability was discussed at length earlier using the relevant data for Lower Gornal in 1851. It remains here to examine if there had been any changes in the extent or pattern of this type of sharing by 1891, and the relevant data is presented for both coalminer and working class households in Tables 5.18 and 5.19 below. The data shows that there had been little overall change in either the extent or pattern of co-residence by individuals who might be regarded as vulnerable in some way, although there were some small significant differences between 1851 and 1891 which will be discussed below.

The proportion of co-residents in coalminer households had risen from 8.4% to 9.3% of the total in 1891; but in working class households, at 14.5%, it had hardly changed from the figure of 14.6% of the total in 1851. In the coalminer households there had been little change since 1851 in the overall structure of the group of co-residents with 43.0% represented by kin and 57.0% by persons unrelated to the head. However, within the group of co-resident kin there had been a significant change by 1891 in the proportion of this group who might be classed as vulnerable: while in 1851 the vulnerable group of kin had represented 43.5% of the total co-resident kin, in 1891 this group had increased to 70.0% of the total. It has been noted already that coalminers in 1891 were more successful at maintaining co-resident relationships with their kin, but it appears that the bulk of these extra co-residents were kin who were economically vulnerable in some way. There had also been a change in the group of unrelated co-residents in 1891: those classed as vulnerable had fallen to 46.6% of the total

Table 5.18 The Pattern of Sharing by Age of Vulnerable Persons in Coalminer Households: Lower Gornal 1891

	0–14		15–19		20–29		30–39		40–49		50–59		60+		Totals	
Vulnerable Persons Sharing	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Unrelated																
single males	7	*2.7*	8	*3.1*	9	*3.5*	4	*1.6*			1	*0.4*	3	*1.2*	32	*12.5*
single females	4	*1.6*	1	*0.4*	3	*1.2*					2	*0.8*	1	*0.4*	11	*4.3*
widowed males									1	*0.4*			2	*0.8*	3	*1.2*
widowed females			1	*0.4*							1	*0.4*	11	*4.3*	13	*5.1*
unrelated solo parents (a)					2	*0.8*			1	*0.4*					3	*1.2*
children of unrelated solo parents	5	*2.0*	1	*0.4*											6	*2.3*
															68	*26.6*
Related																
single brothers/ -in-law	3	*1.2*	2	*0.8*	2	*0.8*	2	*0.8*	1	*0.4*					10	*3.9*
single sisters/ -in-law	2	*0.8*	1	*0.4*	2	*0.8*	2	*0.8*			1	*0.4*	1	*0.4*	9	*3.5*
unaccompanied grandchildren	13	*5.1*	4	*1.6*											17	*6.6*
other unaccompanied relatives	3	*1.2*	1	*0.4*	1	*0.4*					1	*0.4*	4	*1.6*	10	*3.9*
related solo parents (a)			1	*0.4*	3	*1.2*					1	*0.4*			5	*2.0*
children of related solo parents	6	*2.3*	2	*0.8*											8	*3.1*
solo *parents* of the head (b)															0	*0.0*
widowed parents of the head											2	*0.8*	16	*6.3*	18	*7.0*
															77	*30.1*
Others Sharing																
unrelated co-residents															78	*30.5*
co-resident kin															33	*12.9*
Totals	43	*16.8*	22	*8.6*	22	*8.6*	8	*3.1*	3	*1.2*	9	*3.5*	38	*14.8*	256	*100.0*

Notes: (a) unaccompanied by their wives or husbands

(b) mothers/-in-law or fathers/-in-law unaccompanied by their partners

Source: Census Enumerators' Books1891; Registrar's District Dudley; PRO Microfiche 12/2291 and 12/2292

Table 5.19 The Pattern of Sharing by Age of Vulnerable Persons in Working Class Households: Lower Gornal 1891

	0–14		15–19		20–29		30–39		40–49		50–59		60+		Totals	
Vulnerable Persons Sharing	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Unrelated																
single males	2	*1.3*	2	*1.3*	1	*0.6*	1	*0.6*	1	*0.6*			1	*0.6*	8	*5.1*
single females	4	*2.6*	2	*1.3*	1	*0.6*					2	*1.3*			9	*5.8*
widowed males													1	*0.6*	1	*0.6*
widowed females											1	*0.6*	2	*1.3*	3	*1.9*
unrelated solo parents (a)					1	*0.6*									1	*0.6*
children of unrelated solo parents	2	*1.3*													2	*1.3*
															24	***15.4***
Related																
single brothers/ -in-law	3	*1.9*	1	*0.6*	1	*0.6*	1	*0.6*							6	*3.8*
single sisters/ -in-law	1	*0.6*	1	*0.6*	3	*1.9*	1	*0.6*	3	*1.9*	1	*0.6*	1	*0.6*	11	*7.1*
unaccompanied grandchildren	9	*5.8*	2	*1.3*	1	*0.6*									12	*7.7*
other unaccompanied relatives	3	*1.9*	2	*1.3*	2	*1.3*									7	*4.5*
related solo parents (a)					1	*0.6*	2	*1.3*	1	*0.6*	1	*0.6*			5	*3.2*
children of related solo parents	8	*5.1*	2	*1.3*											10	*6.4*
solo parents of the head (b)													1	*0.6*	1	*0.6*
widowed parents of the head											1	*0.6*	10	*6.4*	11	*7.1*
															63	***40.4***
Others Sharing																
unrelated co-residents															32	*20.5*
co-resident kin															37	*23.7*
Totals	32	*20.5*	12	*7.7*	11	*7.1*	5	*3.2*	5	*3.2*	6	*3.8*	16	*10.3*	156	*100.0*

Notes: (a) unaccompanied by their wives or husbands

(b) mothers/-in-law or fathers/-in-law unaccompanied by their partners

Source: Census Enumerators' Books1891; Registrar's District Dudley; PRO Microfiche 12/2291 and 12/2292

compared to 68.4% in 1851. Thus the structural pattern of sharing in coalminer households was changing in favour of relatives in need.

In the working class households the overall structure of the group of co-residents had changed by 1891. In 1851, kin represented 74.9% of the co-residents, but this figure had fallen to 64.1% in 1891; however, this was still a higher proportion than in the coalminer households in 1891. It was noted above that within the group of co-resident kin in coalminer households, the proportion who could be classed as vulnerable in 1891 had increased compared to 1851. This was also true of the working class households generally, with an increase in vulnerable kin from 51.3% to 63.0% of the total co-resident kin. There had also been a change in the group of unrelated co-residents, with a big fall in the proportion represented by those who were economically vulnerable in some way: from 74.5% in 1851 to 42.9% of the total group. This change in the level of vulnerability of this group, in terms of its needs, was also observable in the coalminer households and this was noted above. Thus the changes in the structural pattern of co-residency, especially in connection with this group of people identified as economically vulnerable, were occurring in tandem for the two groups of households between 1851 and 1891.

However, there had been little change between 1851 and 1891 in the overall proportion of these co-resident individuals who could be classed as vulnerable: the figures were remarkably stable, falling slightly from 57.3% to 56.7% in the coalminer households, and from 57.1% to 55.8% in the working class households. These figures alone show how important the facility to share accommodation with other families remained for a small group of vulnerable individuals for most of the second half of the nineteenth century. The increase in the proportion of vulnerable kin amongst the co-residents in both coalminer households and in working class households generally, with the bigger increase in the former, again shows how important kin were to those in need, and these needs had not diminished in the second half of the nineteenth century.

This increase in the proportion of vulnerable co-resident kin in the coalminer households is worth closer examination, and there were several significant changes in the detailed structure of this group of co-residents in 1891 compared to 1851. Within the overall increase in vulnerable kin there were some subtle changes in relative sizes of the smaller groups making up this larger group. The number of co-resident siblings, nephews and nieces and grandchildren had risen, but the main reason for the rise in the vulnerable group was the increase in the number of widowed parents resident with their children. This had risen from only 1.0% of the total co-residents in 1851 to 7.0%

in 1891. (21) It may have been that coalminer families were more successful in 1891 at maintaining these kin relationships because they had become more important to them than they had been in 1851. However, it may be that improvements in mortality, especially among older people, might explain the greater success at maintaining these relationships. More parents survived into old age and therefore became an economic burden on their offspring since they were unable to maintain homes of their own. Alternatively, it was perfectly rational for coalminer families to share surplus accommodation with aged parents who might bring with them economic benefits in the form of shared rents or the provision of unpaid household services.

This increase in the proportion of unaccompanied or widowed parents living with their offspring was also true of the working class households generally, with an increase from 1.0% in 1851 to 7.7% in 1891. (22) The working class generally were maintaining these particular kin relationships more successfuly at the end than they had been doing in the middle of the nineteenth century. Interestingly in the coalminer households there had also been a significant increase in the number of unrelated widowed people co-resident: 6.3% of the total in 1891 compared to 2.9% in 1851. (23) In the working-class households generally this proportion remained the same in the second half of the nineteenth century. The economic benefits which these older individuals could bring to coalminer households presumably outweighed the potential problems of sharing with unrelated people and the extra burden which this placed on limited space. Moreover, such unrelated persons may well have been known for some time by the families with whom they shared, either through contact in the workplace or through previous residential propinquity. It was thus not a case of families throwing open their homes to old unaccompanied or widowed strangers.

Attention was drawn earlier to the size of the group of vulnerable co-residents represented by those under twenty years of age. In coalminer households in 1851 this group represented 31.1% of the total co-residents, but in 1891 this had fallen to 25.4% of the total. The main reason for this was the substantial fall in the proportion of unrelated single males and females under twenty who were co-resident with coalminer families in 1891. Either the level of vulnerability amongst this group of young people had fallen by 1891, making the seeking and sharing of accommodation with other families unneccesary, or coalminers were less willing or unable to provide such accommodation. It is possible that the improvement in real wages and standard of living in the late nineteenth century did lessen the risk of economic destitution for many working class families, and this in turn may have allowed such families to maintain their integrity in the face of crises, which in previous generations had led to families

splitting up and their young people needing to seek shelter with other families. It is impossible to estimate the extent of this improvement or its effects on family integrity. It is also possible that, as coalminers became more successful at maintaining their kin relationships in the second half of the nineteenth century, the opportunities to share their accommodation with unrelated people were proportionally reduced. It must also be remembered that coalminer families had increased in size by 1891 and this must have put extra pressure on already crowded accommodation. (24) In 1851 they had been willing to share readily with unrelated young persons under twenty but this may simply not have been possible in 1891, either because they were unable or because their willingness had diminished. (25) This change in the pattern of co-residence, a fall in the proportion of young people under twenty, was also present in working class households generally and can be clearly seen in Table 6.19. Whereas in 1851 this group represented 32.5% of the total co-residents, in 1891 this had fallen to 28.2% of the total. However, this fall was largely the result of a decrease in the proportion of unaccompanied grandachildren and other relatives sharing with working class families in 1891. This group of young kin had accounted for 19.8% of the total co-residents in 1851, but in 1891 only accounted for 10.3% of the total. It is not easy to see why the working class generally were not as successful in 1891 at sharing with this group of young people as they had been in 1851, but the explanation must lie in the greater success which the working class generally were having at maintaining their integrity as family units in the face of economic crises. Perhaps the need for young kin to share was diminishing as part of an overall trend in working class residence patterns by the end of the nineteenth century.

Cradley 1851

The Pattern of Residence

Table 5.20 below shows the pattern of residence in those Cradley households which have been described as coalminer households, and also in those households described as consisting of the working class generally, using the same definitions of both types of household used throughout this Thesis.

The immediate problem with this data is the small number of coalminer households on which it is based. It has already been shown that Cradley was predominantly an iron making and blacksmithing community in 1851 with coalmining being just one of the subsidiary occupations of the population. The twenty households detailed in Table

6.20 above only accounted for 3.2% of the total. Thus any conclusions drawn about the coalminer population from so small a group of households must thus be tentative at best.

Table 5.20 The Pattern of Household Residence in Coalminer and other Working-Class Households: Cradley 1851

	Coalminer Households		Other Working Class Households	
	N	%	N	%
One nuclear family only (a)	14	*70.0*	82	*67.8*
Oter kin only	3	*15.0*	20	*16.5*
Other kin and other occupants unrelated to the head (b)	1	*5.0*	6	*5.0*
Lodgers only	1	*5.0*	10	*8.3*
Visitors only (c)	1	*5.0*	1	*0.8*
Servants only (d)	0	*0.0*	1	*0.8*
Others	0	*0.0*	1 (e)	*0.8*
Totals	20	*100.0*	121	*100.0*

Notes:
(a) These households consist of single or widowed heads, married couples, and married couples with unmarried children
(b) This category consisted of 6 households all shared with lodgers
(c) These are assumed to be unrelated to the Head, but many were probably related to the wife of the Head whose surname is not known
(d) Households with no other persons except servants lodging
(e) This household was shared with both 2 lodgers and 1visitor

Source: Census Enumerators' Books; Registrar's District Halesowen; PRO Microfilm No. HO 1072034

Despite these problems, both the coalminer and working class households in general in Cradley in 1851 do share similarities with those of Lower Gornal at the same date. The relatively simple household consisting of married couples or parents with their unmarried children predominates as it did in Lower Gornal with 70.0% of the coalminer and 67.8% of the working-class households being in this category. Translated into numbers of people, of the 98 people resident in coalminer households,

none headed them alone or shared with persons not related to them; only 4.1% were unrelated to any one in the households in which they lived; while the remainder of the population, 95.9%, lived in households in which there were other people related to them by blood or marriage. In the working-class households the picture is largely the same: again,of the 619 people resident in the sample, none headed them alone or shared with unrelated people; only 5.0% were unrelated to the rest of the household in which they lived; while, again, the vast majority of the working class population, 95.0%, were related in some way to the head of the household in which they lived. In this respect, Cradley was no different from Lower Gornal in the mid-nineteenth century in being a familistic society.

The Extended Family

If the analysis of shared households is now narrowed to examining the pattern of residence of those people who were related, in both coalminer and other working class households, the picture is presented by the data in Table 5.21 below. The unrepresentative nature of the coalminer households becomes very evident in data such as that presented in Table 5.21 below. The relatively young coalminer families who made up the bulk of the coalminer population in Cradley had not yet, by 1851, had time to generate any of the stem families which would have been present in a population with a more normal age distribution. (26) It is, therefore, not really suprising to find that the few of the kin sharing with coalminer families were more distant relatives in terms of co-residency, like siblings and nephews. This can be seen in the full description of the relationship to the head of the household of all those kin resident in coalminer households in 1851, presented in Table 5.22 below. The full description of relationships in working class households is presented in Table 5.23. In fact, the 7 relatives co-resident in the coalminer households represented 7.1% of the total coalminer population, a greater proportion than the 3.7% which relatives represented in the coalminer households in Lower Gornal in 1851. (27) The comparative smallness of the sample is no doubt responsible for this somewhat skewed result.

If attention is turned to the other working-class households in Cradley in 1851, the 41 relatives co-resident in the working-class households represented only 6.6% of the sample, whereas in the Lower Gornal working-class households at the same time

Table 5.21 **Structure of the Families of Coalminer and other Working-Class Heads of Household: Cradley 1851**

	Coalminer Households			Other working-class households		
	N	%		N	%	
Solo head, or sharing with unrelated persons	0	*0.0*	*0.0*	*0*	*0.0*	*0.0*
Married couple only	2	*10.0*		*18*	*14.9*	
Married couple or widowed person with unmarried children	14	*70.0*	*80.0*	*77*	*63.6*	*78.5*
Married couple or widowed person with married children	0	*0.0*		*1*	*0.8*	
Married couple or widowed person with both unmarried and married children	0	*0.0*		*1*	*0.8*	
Married couple or widowed person with married children and grandchildren	0	*0.0*		*4*	*3.3*	
Married couple or widowed person with unmarried children, married children and grandchildren	0	*0.0*		*0*	*0.0*	
Married couple or widowed person with grandchildren	0	*0.0*	*0.0*	*1*	*0.8*	*5.7*
Other combinations of relatives	*4*	*20.0*	*20.0*	*19*	*15.7*	*15.7*
Totals	**20**	***100.0***	***100.0***	***121***	***99.9***	***99.9***

Source: Census Enumerators' Books; Registrar's District Halesowen; PRO Microfilm No. HO 1072034

the co-resident kin represented 11.0% of the sample. (28) Like the coalminer population in Cradley in 1851, the working class generally were also relatively young and had not yet generated the volume of stem families which would have been present in a population with a more normal age-distribution. Moreover, the relative instability of the population of Cradley, and in particular the level of in-migration evident before 1851, was, possibly, the cause of the lack of success at maintaining kinship links among the working class population generally.

Table 5.22 **Relationship of Kin by Age to the Head of Coalminer Households: Cradley 1851**

	0–14		15–19		20–24		25–29		30–39		40–49		50–59		60+		Totals	
	N	*%*	*N*	*%*	*N*	*%*	*N*	*%*	*N*	*%*	*N*	*%*	*N*	*%*	*N*	*%*	*N*	*%*
Father/Father-in-law		*0.0*		*0.0*											1	*14.3*	1	*14.3*
Nephew/Neice without parent	2	*28.6*	1	*14.3*				*0.0*									3	*42.9*
Grandchild with parent	2	*28.6*		*0.0*													2	*28.6*
Brother-in-law				*0.0*	1	*14.3*		*0.0*									1	*14.3*
Totals	4	*57.1*	1	*14.3*	1	*14.3*	0	*0.0*	0	*0.0*	0	*0.0*	0	*0.0*	1	*14.3*	7	*100.0*

Source: Census Enumerators' Books 1851; Registrar's District Halesowen; PRO Microfilm No. HO 1072030

Table 5.23 **Relationship of Kin by Age to the Head of Working-Class Households: Cradley 1851**

	0–14		15–19		20–24		25–29		30–39		40–49		50–59		60+		Totals	
	N	%	*N*	%	*N*	%	*N*	%	*N*	%	*N*	%	*N*	%	*N*	%	*N*	%
Mother/Mother-in-law															3	*7.3*	3	*7.3*
Married/Widowed Son					2	*4.9*	1	*2.4*	1	*2.4*							4	*9.8*
Married/Widowed Daughter					1	*2.4*											1	*2.4*
Brother					1	*2.4*							2	*4.9*			3	*7.3*
Sister					1	*2.4*											1	*2.4*
Nephew/Neice without parent			1	*2.4*													1	*2.4*
Grandchild with parent	7	*17.1*		*0.0*													7	*17.1*
Grandchild without parent	5	*12.2*	2	*4.9*													7	*17.1*
Son-in-law					2	*4.9*			1	*2.4*							3	*7.3*
Daughter-in-law					2	*4.9*											2	*4.9*
Stepson	1	*2.4*	2.0	*4.9*	1	*2.4*											4	*9.8*
Stepdaughter	2	*4.9*															2	*4.9*
Brother-in-law					1	*2.4*											1	*2.4*
Sister-in-law	2	*4.9*															2	*4.9*
Totals	17	*36.6*	5	*12.2*	11	*26.8*	1	*2.4*	2	*4.9*	0	*0.0*	2	*4.9*	3	*7.3*	41	*100.0*

Source: Census Enumerators' Books 1851; Registrar's District Halesowen; PRO Microfilm No. HO 1072030

Unrelated Residents

To complete the analysis of the Cradley shared households in 1851, some attention must be given to those households with residents unrelated to the head: those containing lodgers, visitors and servants, and this data is presented in Table 5.24 below.

Table 5.24 The Structure of the Co-Residing but Unrelated Group in Coalminer and other Working Class Households: Cradley 1851

	Coalminer Households								Working Class Households							
	Married		Single		Widowed		Totals		Married		Single		Widowed		Totals	
	N.	%	*N.*	%	*N.*	%	*N.*	%	*N.*	%	*N.*	%	*N.*	%	*N.*	%
Visitors	*0*	0.0	*1*	25.0	*0*	0.0	*1*	25.0	*0*	0.0	*2*	6.5	*0*	0.0	*2*	6.5
Lodgers	*0*	0.0	*2*	50.0	*0*	0.0	*3*	75.0	*4*	12.9	*23*	74.2	*1*	3.2	*28*	90.3
Servants	*0*	0.00	*0*	0.0	*0*	0.0	*0*	0.0	*0*	0.0	*1*	3.2	*0*	0.0	*1*	3.2
							4	100.0							*31*	100.0

Source: Census Enumerators' Books; Registrar's District Halesowen; PRO Microfilm No. HO 1072034

Attention was drawn earlier to the small number of co-resident people unrelated to the head in both coalminer and working class households in general in Lower Gornal in the second half of the nineteenth century. Table 5.24 above shows that this was also a feature of the pattern of residence in Cradley in 1851. From Table 5.21 earlier in this Chapter, it can be seen that 15.0% of the coalminer and 15.7% of the working class households in Cradley in 1851 had co-residents unrelated to the head, and these figures accord quite closely with those for Lower Gornal in 1851 of 15.2% and 13.2% respectively. (29) The small number of unrelated co-residents is emphasised even more when translated into the number of people, for in the coalminer households this group only amounted to 4.1% of the total, while in the working class households in

general it amounted to 5.0%. This pattern of residence, involving the sharing of accommodation with persons unrelated to the main resident nuclear family, was not a common social phenomenon in Lower Gornal or Cradley in the mid-nineteenth century.

Interestingly, within the group of unrelated co-residents detailed above, by far the biggest proportion of this group in both types of household consisted of lodgers. This was different to the pattern which emerged in Lower Gornal in 1851 where their numbers were approximately equal to those of the visitors. It would not be an exaggeration to say that there were virtually no visitors resident in working class homes altogether in Cradley in 1851, at least if this Census snapshot of Sunday March 30th was typical of residence patterns generally. (30) The relatively unsettled and unstable nature of the working-class community in Cradley probably lies behind this phenomenon, since some degree of intimacy would presumably have been necessary between host and visitor, and these relationships had not yet had time to develop in Cradley by 1851. Moreover, if many of the visitors recorded by the Census are assumed to have been relatives, it must have been very difficult, in an unsettled community consisting of many in-migrants, to maintain these relationships successfully.

Cradley 1891

The Pattern of Residence

The last section of this Chapter will examine patterns of residence and relationships within Cradley households in 1891. Coalminer households will be compared with those of the working class generally, comparison will be made with households in 1851, and Cradley households will be compared with those in Lower Gornal at the same time. Table 5.25 below shows the pattern of residence in both coalminer and other working class households in Cradley in 1891.

As in 1851, the pattern of residence in 1891 was predominantly that of nuclear families of single heads, married couples or parents with their unmarried children, with 77.3% of the coalminer and 74.3% of the working class households generally falling into this category, a small increase for both types of household since 1851. (31) If this household pattern is translated into numbers of people, then out of the 398 people resident in coalminer households in Cradley, none headed such households either alone

Table 5.25 The Pattern of Household Residence in Coalminer and other Working-Class Households: Cradley 1891

	Coalminer Households		Other Working Class Households	
	N	%	N	%
One nuclear family only (a)	58	*77.3*	81	*74.3*
Other kin only	7	*9.3*	14	*12.8*
Other kin and other occupants unrelated to the head	1(b)	*1.3*	2 (c)	*1.8*
Dual Heads and their families (d)	1	*1.3*	1	*0.9*
Lodgers/Boarders only	7	*9.3*	8	*7.3*
Visitors only (e)	1	*1.3*	0	*0.0*
Servants only (f)	0	*0.0*	2	*1.8*
Other combinations of co-residency	0	*0.0*	1 (g)	*0.9*
Totals	**75**	***99.8***	**109**	***99.8***

Notes:
(a) These households consist of single or widowed heads, married couples, and married couples with unmarried children
(b) This category consisted of 1 household shared with a visitor
(c) This category consisted of 2 households shared with lodgers
(d) These were households with two Heads recorded as co-resident
(e) These are assumed to be unrelated to the Head, but some were probably related to the wife of the Head, but whose surname is not known
(f) Households with no other persons except servants lodging
(g) This category consisted of 1 household shared with an apprentice

Source: Census Enumerators' Books 1891; Registrar's District Stourbridge; Sub-District Halesowen; PRO Microfiche 375 1B

or with persons not related to them; 4.5% lived either as solo servants or lodgers unrelated to anyone in the households in which they lived; while the remainder of the coalminer population, 95.5%, lived in households in which there were people related to them by blood or marriage. The picture is little different among the working class generally where, of the 574 persons resident in the sample households, 0.2% headed households alone or with unrelated persons; only 3.4% were solo servants or unrelated lodgers; while the remainder, 96.4% of the working class population, lived with persons related to them by blood or marriage. Just as the coalminer and the other

working class households generally in Cradley in 1851 had shared a very similar pattern of residence, this similarity is also evident in 1891. Moreover, the small changes which had taken place in the overall pattern of shared residence had occurred in both types of household. There were really no very significant differences between the shared households of coalminers and those of the working class among whom they lived and worked in Cradley in the second half of the nineteenth century.

The Extended Family

The proportion of households with co-resident kin had fallen in 1891 to 10.6% from 15.0% for the coalminer and to 14.6% from 21.5% for the working class households. Thus it would seem, at first sight, that the working class of Cradley were less successful at the end of the nineteenth century at maintaining co-resident relationships with kin than they had been earlier in the century. Moreover, this is exactly the opposite of what had been happening in Lower Gornal in the same period, where sharing with kin in coalminer households was more common in 1891 than 1851, and just as common in the working class households generally. (32) It was pointed out that as a community became more stable and settled with little in-migration so it would become easier for kinship relationships to be maintained more successfully, and this would seem to have been the model which prevailed in Lower Gornal in the second half of the nineteenth century. However, this model would also seem to have applied to Cradley during the same period, with less in-migration and the slow establishment of a settled and stable community. Yet it did not lead to any improvement in the successful maintenance of kinship relationships, but rather the opposite. Thus there would seem to be something of a paradox here in the model of residence patterns. Is the data at fault? The fragility of the coalminer data for Cradley in 1851 has already been pointed out, but the changes observable in the coalminer households were also present in working lcass households generally, and thus they cannot be dismissed lightly. Is the model at fault? Was the relative stability of a working class community an unimportant factor in determining success at maintaining kinship relationships? Were other factors at work in determining whether any particular household was shared with kin or not, and if so, what were these factors?

Table 5.26 below attempts to reconstruct the pattern of residence by examining the relationships to the head of the household of the co-residing kin. Some of these households were,of course, shared with non-relatives, and this group of co-residents will be examined later. It was pointed out earlier that the relatively abnormal age

profile of the coalminer population, coupled with the newness of this population in the changing working class community of Cradley in 1851, had prevented the development of any stem families co-resident with coalminer heads. As the community became more stable in the second half of the century it would be expected that these families would now begin to appear, and that there would be a greater degree of success at maintaining contact with these kinds of kin. This had, indeed, happened among the coalminer households in 1891, and Table 5.26 shows that 6.6% of the households had such stem families co-resident. This figure is much higher than that for Lower Gornal in 1851 or 1891, when it would seem that the relative stability in the community was not a significant factor in the maintenance of successful relationships with the stem family. (33) In Lower Gornal in 1891 there was a greater amount of co-residence with more distant relatives, but Table 5.26 above shows that this was not the case in Cradley where the proportion of households having these more distant kin co-resident had fallen to 4.0% by 1891 from the higher figure of 20.0% in 1851, although, again, the fragility of the 1851 figures should be remembered. The working class households, while also experiencing a fall in the proportion of this group of kin, from 15.7% in 1851 to 10.1% in 1891, do not seem to have experienced such a dramatic fall as the coalminers. The small sample of coalminer households in Cradley in 1851, and the fragile figures emerging from them may be entirely responsible for this anomaly.

The emergence of these more extended families in coalminer households in Cradley by 1891 can be seen in the detailed description of the relationship to the head of the household of all kin resident in 1891 presented in Table 5.27 below. Similar details for the other working class households are presented in Table 5.28. In the first place however, the relatively few kin co-resident in all working-class households must again be emphasised. The number of relatives co-resident in coalminer households was still very small in 1891: only 14 out of a coalminer population of 398 people, or 3.5% of the total: a fall from the figure of 7.1% in 1851. The proportion of kin in working class households generally, 28 out of a sample population of 574, represented 4.9%: a small fall from the figure of 6.6% in 1851. The similarities between the coalminer households and the rest of the working class generally has been referred to many times so far in this Thesis. Here another example of the relative conformity by the coalminer population to the rest of the working class population among whom they lived.

In both types of household the biggest category of co-resident kin, representing over one in three of all kin, was that of grandchildren, both those with their parents, and those unaccompanied by their parents. In the coalminer households in 1851 the biggest single category was nephews and nieces, with grandchildren in second place,

but the number of co-resident kin in 1851 was so small that no great significance should be attached to this. The large number of co-resident grandchildren was also a feature of the shared households in Lower Gornal both in 1851 and 1891, and it would seem that this type of kinship co-residence was common to the working class in the second half of the nineteenth century.

Table 5.26 Structure of the Families of Coalminer and other Working-Class Heads of Household: Cradley 1891

	Coalminer Households			Other working class households		
	N	%		N	%	
Solo head, or sharing with unrelated persons	0	0.0	0.0	1	0.9	0.9
Married couple only	12	16.0		4	3.7	
Married couple or widowed person with unmarried children	55	73.3	89.3	88	80.7	84.4
Married couple or widowed person with married children	0	0.0		2	1.8	
Married couple or widowed person with both unmarried and married children	1	1.3		0	0.0	
Married couple or widowed person with married children and grandchildren	0	0.0		1	0.9	
Married couple or widowed person with unmarried children, married children and grandchildren	3	4.0		0	0.0	
Married couple or widowed person with grandchildren	1	1.3	6.6	2	1.8	4.5
Other combinations of relatives	3	4.0	4.0	11	10.1	10.1
Totals	75	99.9	99.9	109	99.9	99.9

Source: Census Enumerators' Books 1891; Registrar's District Stourbridge; Sub-District Halesowen; PRO Microfiche 375 1B

Table 5.27 **Relationship of Kin by Age to the Head of Coalminer Households: Cradley 1891**

	0–14		15–19		20–24		25–29		30–39		40–49		50–59		60+		Totals	
	N	*%*	*N*	*%*	*N*	*%*	*N*	*%*	*N*	*%*	*N*	*%*	*N*	*%*	*N*	*%*	*N*	*%*
Mother/Mother-in-law														*0.0*	1	*7.1*	1	*7.1*
Married/Widowed Daughter					1	*7.1*	1	*7.1*	1	*7.1*							3	*21.4*
Brother													1	*7.1*			1	*7.1*
Nephew/Neice with parent	1	*7.1*															1	*7.1*
Grandchild with parent	4	*28.6*															4	*28.6*
Grandchild without parent	1	*7.1*															1	*7.1*
Son-in-law					1	*7.1*											1	*7.1*
Daughter-in-law			1	*7.1*													1	*7.1*
Brother-in-law							1	*7.1*									1	*7.1*
Totals	6	*42.9*	1	*7.1*	2	*14.3*	2	*14.3*	1	*7.1*	0	*0.0*	1	*7.1*	1	*7.1*	14	*100.0*

Source: Census Enumerators' Books1891; Registrar's District Stourbridge; Sub-District Halesowen; PRO Microfiche 375 1B

Table 5.28 **Relationship of Kin by Age to the Head of Working-Class Households: Cradley 1891**

	0--14		15--19		20--24		25--29		30--39		40--49		50--59		60+		Totals	
	N	*%*	*N*	*%*	*N*	*%*	*N*	*%*	*N*	*%*	*N*	*%*	*N*	*%*	*N*	*%*	*N*	*%*
Father/Father-in-law															1	*3.6*	1	*3.6*
Married/Widowed Son							1	*3.6*									1	*3.6*
Married/Widowed Daughter					2	*7.1*	1	*3.6*									3	*10.7*
Nephew/Neice without parent	1	*3.6*	1	*3.6*													2	*7.1*
Grandchild with parent	4	*14.3*		*0.0*													4	*14.3*
Grandchild without parent	5	*17.9*	1	*3.6*													6	*21.4*
Son-in-law					1	*3.6*	1	*3.6*	1	*3.6*							3	*10.7*
Daughter-in-law							1	*3.6*									1	*3.6*
Stepson	5	*17.9*															5	*17.9*
Brother-in-law											1	*3.6*					1	*3.6*
Cousin													1	*3.6*			1	*3.6*
Totals	15	*53.6*	2	*7.1*	3	*10.7*	4	*14.3*	1	*3.6*	1	*3.6*	0	*0.0*	1	*3.6*	**28**	***100.0***

Source: Census Enumerators' Books1891; Registrar's District Stourbridge; Sub-District Halesowen; PRO Microfiche 375 1B

Unlike the heads of working-class households in Lower Gornal in 1891, however, neither the heads of coalminer nor other working class households in Cradley seem to have achieved the same level of success in maintaining relationships with older parents. This was apparent in the population generally in Cradley in 1851, and there had been virtually no change by 1891, when only 7.1% of the coalminer, and as little as 3.6% of the working-class, population generally consisted of co-resident mothers/mothers-in-law or fathers/fathers-in-law. If the successful maintenance of such relationships correlates in any degree to the extent to which a community was stable and settled, then this difference between Lower Gornal and Cradley would be expected: in the relatively more stable Lower Gornal there was a higher proportion of such relationships than in the relatively less stable Cradley at the same time. This assumes, of course, that other factors, such as life-expectancy, were the same for both communities.

A comparison of Tables 5.27 and 5.28 with those for Lower Gornal in 1891, Tables 5.13 and 5.14, also seems to show that the working class, including the coalminers, of Cradley were not as successful at maintaining relationships with more distant kin as were their counterparts in Lower Gornal. There were only two brothers and one niece co-resident with coalminer heads, and the working class generally were no more successful at maintaining these relationships, with only two nieces, one brother and one cousin co-resident. Again, if the successful maintenance of such relationships correlates in any degree to the extent to which a community was stable and settled, then this difference between Lower Gornal and Cradley would be expected: in the relatively more stable Lower Gornal there was a higher proportion of such relationships than in the relatively less stable Cradley at the same time.

Unrelated Residents

To complete this analysis of shared households in Cradley in 1891 it is necessary, again, to examine those with residents unrelated to the head, those containing lodgers, visitors, dual heads and their families, or servants, and this data is presented in Table 5.29 below. Attention was drawn earlier to the small number of co-resident people unrelated to the head in both coalminer and working class households in general in Lower Gornal in the second half of the nineteenth century. Table 5.29 below shows that this was also a feature of the pattern of residence in Cradley in 1851. From Table 5.22 earlier in this Chapter, it can be seen that 15.0% of the coalminer and 15.7% of the working class households in Cradley in 1851 had co-residents unrelated to the

head, and these figures accord quite closely with those for Lower Gornal in 1851 of 15.2% and 13.2% respectively.

It was shown earlier in Table 5.25 that only 13.2% of the coalminer and 14.5% of the working-class households were shared with people unrelated to the head of the household, and comparison with Table 5.25 shows that a slightly smaller proportion of households in 1891 were sharing with unrelated people than was the case in 1851. This had also been the case in Lower Gornal in 1891. These very small proportions are emphasised even more when translated into numbers of people in Cradley in 1891: in coalminer households these unrelated co-resident people only amounted to 18 out of

Table 5.29 The Structure of the Co-Residing but Unrelated Group in Coalminer and other Working-Class Households: Cradley 1891

	Coalminer Households								Working Class Households							
	Married		Single		Widowed		Totals		Married		Single		Widowed		Totals	
	N.	%	*N.*	%	*N.*	%	*N.*	%	*N.*	%	*N.*	%	*N.*	%	*N.*	%
Visitors (a)	*0*	0.0	*2*	11.1	*0*	0.0	*2*	11.1	*0*	0.0	*0*	0.0	*0*	0.0	*0*	0.0
Lodgers	*2*	11.1	*10*	55.6	*1*	5.6	*13*	72.3	*2*	10.0	*8*	40.0	*3*	15.0	*13*	65.0
Dual House-holds (b)	*2*	11.1	*1*	5.6	*1*	5.6	*3*	16.7	*2*	10.0	*2*	10.0	*0*	0.0	*4*	20.0
Servants	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	*0*	0.0	0	0.0	1	5.0	1	5.0	*2*	10.0
Others	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	*0*	0.0	0	0.0	1(c)	5.0	0	0.0	*1*	5.0
Totals							18	100.1							*20*	100.0

Notes:
(a) It is, of course, possible that many of these were in fact related to the head but were not recorded as such in the Census
(b) This category is defined in the text
(c) This was an apprentice

Source: Census Enumerators' Books 1891; Registrar's District Stourbridge; Sub-District Halesowen; PRO Microfiche 375 1B

398 people, or 4.5% of the total population; while in the working class households in general, they only amounted to 20 out of 574 people, or 3.4% of the sample population: very insignificant proportions.

Visitors were almost non-existent in both the coalminer and working class households in general in Cradley in 1851, and this was still true in 1891 with only two co-resident with coalminers and none at all with the working-class population. Cradley had still not developed that degree of residential stability which would have allowed this type of temporary sharing of accommodation with visitors.

Thus, a pattern of residence which involved the sharing of accommodation with persons largely unrelated to the main resident nuclear family was not a common social phenomenon in Lower Gornal or Cradley in the second half of the nineteenth century, either among the coalminer population or the working class generally. Such differences which did exist between the two communities in their patterns of residence were fairly minor, and there was little change between 1851 and 1891.

NOTES for CHAPTER FIVE

1 **M.Anderson,** *The Family in Nineteenth Century Lancashire*, (1971), p.43

2 Ibid., p.44

3 Ibid.; Michael Anderson quotes a figure of 9.0% of all households containing kin beyond the nuclear family in Engalnd and Wales in 1966

4 Ibid., p.45

5 **E.Higgs,** *Making Sense of the Census*, (1989), p.59

6 Ibid., p.60

7 See Table 5.1

8 In the coalminer households the people co-resident but unrelated to the head represented 57 out of a sample population of 1221 people ie. 4.7%; in the other working class households they represented 51 out of a sample population of 1388 people ie. 3.7%

9 M.Anderson, op.cit., p.46

10 These figures have been extrapolated from Table 5.1, and the data used in its compilation. There were 19 coalminer households out of 225 with lodgers, or 8.4%; and there were 16 out of the working class sample of 258 households, or 6.2% . In terms of numbers of people, there were 31 lodgers in the coalminer households out of a total of 1221 people, or 2.5%; in the working class households there were 22 lodgers out of a total population of 1388 people, or 1.6%

11 M.Anderson, op.cit., p.53

12 Ibid., p.50

13 See Table 5.1

14 Ibid.

15 see Tables 5.3 and 5.4

16 Ibid.

17 The meaning of the category called *'dual head'* was discussed earlier in this Chapter. In practice they will be regarded as lodgers.

18 see Table 5.6

19 E.Higgs, op.cit., p.105

20 See Tables 5.7 and 5.8

21 See Table 5.9

22 Ibid.

23 Ibid.

24 The increase in the size of coalminer families was analysed and discussed in Chapter 4

25 See Table 5.9

26 The age structure of the Cradley population is analysed and discussed in Chapter 3

27 See Table 5.3

28 See Table 5.4

29 See Table 5.1

30 E.Higgs, op.cit., p.105

31 Comparison can be made with Table 5.17

32 This comparison can be seen by reference to Tables 5.1 and 5.11

33 See Tables 5.2 and 5.12

CHAPTER SIX

Explanations

This Chapter will examine the possible causes of the demographic patterns of household composition analysed in the last three Chapters. In particular it will examine a range of possible factors to explain why there were differences between the coalminer households and the working class generally in Lower Gornal where the coalminers formed a substantial proportion of the population in 1851 and 1891; and also why there was a different pattern of household structure in Cradley where the coalminers were simply one occupational group amongst a predominantly metal working community.

Coalminers and the Working Class in Lower Gornal

How then, can the differences between the coalminers and the working class in general be explained? Why were there such marked demographic differences between the two populations in 1851 and 1891? It may be that 1891 was indeed a turning point in coalminer demography. In many features of their household demography, such as the overall age structure and in particular the age profile of married couples in the 20-44 age group, coalminer households may have been conforming to what can be regarded as the working class norm. This has been demonstrated from the Lower Gornal data. On the other hand, they were undoubtedly still producing larger families. This paradox may be the result of 1891 being something of a watershed in coalminer household structure, and the smaller families, which were already being seen in other groups, were lagging behind for the coalminers. Until the 1901 Census is open for analysis such suggestions are,. of course, purely speculative.

Part of the explanation must lie with increased fertility of coalminers' wives at the same time as other working class women were at least containing their fertility and in many cases actually reducing it. The rise of one and the fall of the other has emphasised the difference between the coalminers and the rest of the working class. If coalminer fertility was rising in the second half of the nineteenth century, to what can it be attributed? A number of lines of argument will be explored: attitudes towards marriage; levels of nuptiality; the age at which coalminers were marrying; the frequency of births; the levels of female work opportunities; and the economic climate

as a factor both encouraging early marriage and frequent pregnancies, and discouraging the need for female employment.

(a) Attitudes towards marriage

The data presented so far, and especially that showing levels of nuptiality, confirms the generally accepted notion that marriage was the common experience of nearly all working-class men and women in the late 19th century. (1) In Lower Gornal in 1851 among the over-25 coalminer population only 4.7% of the men and 2.7% of the women were unmarried and there were no women over 35 years of age who had not been married at some time. Amongst the working class in general a slightly different picture emerges for while only 4.2% of the men over 25 were unmarried, this figure rises to 6.2% for the women over 25 years of age. In coalminer households in 1851 there were fewer unmarried women: the coalminer population was essentially a married one.

By 1891 there had been virtually no change in the marital status of the coalminer population with only 4.3% of the men and 2.8% of the women over 25 remaining unmarried. Moreover, only 0.8% of the females over 35 in coalminer households recorded their status as unmarried in 1891. However, amongst the working class population in general the proportion of unmarried men and women has risen to 6.0% and 7.1% respectively by 1891. Thus at this very basic level, ignoring age-specicifc differences in marital status, and the incidence of illegitimacy among both the coalminers and the working class in general, it would be reasonable to expect overall coalminer fertility to be higher simply because more women in coalminer households married than in other working-class households in general. Part of the mythology surrounding coalminer family life is the notion that coalminers had a "fondness for young brides", and the historiography of this notion was discussed in the first chapter of this thesis. (2) Moreover, unlike other working class occupational groups in the late nineteenth century, age of marriage did not rise for the coalminers, but instead displayed a significant lag before eventually displaying characteristics more in common with the rest of the working class. (3)

This mythology is easy to understand if we accept the notion of a coalmining culture in which a woman was expected to marry a man engaged in the same trade as her father, and in which marriage to a miner was regarded as a prize worth having both because of the miners' physical superiority and also because of their enhanced financial status

compared to other working-class men. These are large assumptions but there is some literary evidence for them, such as that expressed in popular Black Country Broadsides in the 19th century:

You may know the jolly Colliers, they are smart cheerful Blades,
For when they go in company with pretty young maids,
They'll kiss them and cuddle them, and spend their money free,
And of the lads in Staffordshire a Collier lad for me

You may know the jolly Collier as he walks thro' the street.
He's so neat in his clothing, his dress is so complete;
He has teeth as white as ivory, and his eyes are black as sloes,
You may know my jolly Collier wherever he goes.

(4)

Such pretty young maids were, no doubt prepared to ignore the warning of the fourth verse of this Broadside, preferring instead the exalted financial status of their intended coalminer husbands:

Sometimes we have money, sometimes we have none,
But we can get credit wherever we go (5)

Moreover, it seems that such cultural norms were strong enough to override opposition from parents who knew better about the likely consequences of marrying a miner, especially when his financial status was compared to that of other working-class men:

My mother says if I wed a collier
It will break her tender heart;
But I doe care what my mother tells me;
A collier I'll have for my sweetheart

Colliers they getting gold and silver,
Nailers getting nothing but brass.
So what wise wench would marry a nailer,
While there's plenty of collier lads. (6)

Such an analysis is, of course, over-simplistic, based on dubious literary evidence of Broadsides and songs whose purpose was to entertain rather than instruct.

Of the thirteen unmarried women aged over thirty-five in the working-class households in Lower Gornal in 1851, four were heads of household and therefore should be eliminated from the comparison since there were by definition none in coalminer

households. Of the remaining nine, four were lodgers and five were relatives of the head. All but three of the thirteen unmarried women were recorded as being nailers and it may be that the ready availability of such occupations in Lower Gornal enabled women to support themselves and their illegitimate children without recourse to marriage. There was some recording of illegitimate children in the Census Enumerators' Books for both Lower Gornal and Cradley in 1851 and 1891, but overtly illegitimate children formed only a very tiny proportion of the total number of children eunumerated. Nailmaking may also have encouraged daughters to stay in the family home longer: as the hand crafting of nails became increasingly marginalised in the 19th century a family income sufficient to prevent destitution could only be maintained by all its members working at making nails. This may have exerted a delaying factor on marriage for the young women from such families. In the absence of any harder evidence such suggestions must remain speculative however.

Whatever working class norms prevailed in the Black Country in the nineteenth century to help men and women chose their life partners, some middle class religious moralists, like the vicar of Coseley, were in no doubt at all about the methods used:

> *It is in the public taproom, at the scene of nocturnal revelry or riotous debauchery, that the unhappy candidate for connubial joys selects, as the future mother of his children, some gaily decked slattern, with a mind barren of every requisite for promoting the comfort of a home, or for bringing up children in the paths of virtue and respectability.*
>
> (7)

Such descriptions are, in reality, far from being objective portraits. They are written by outsiders, the product of middle class observation, reflecting middle class personal and cultural values, probing an unfamiliar social phenomenon, and, in the case of the vicar of Coseley above, little more than moralistic rhetoric.

Obtaining working-class attitudes in general to marriage is very difficult, and there is the ever-present danger for the historian of generalising from very limited evidence. David Vincent's autobiographical evidence suggests that there was freedom of choice of marriage partners with very little parental influence, and that working-class men and women were aware of how important marriage was. (8) Autobiographical evidence is, of course, atypical, even more so when it is working-class. Moreover, such evidence may easily hide the unexpressed, unspoken and unconscious influences which would bear on working-class men and women while making these important decisions.

However, the view was generally held by most autobiographers that marriage was very much a matter of course for working-class couples, involving a choice of partner, but not really a choice of action, and that there was very little romance involved, which is hardly surprising, given the climate of economic uncertainty and the need to survive which formed the daily round for most working class men and women. (9) The oral evidence from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries largely supports this notion of working class marriages being unromantic, although most of the witnesses maintained that there was a genuine affection between partners in marriage, but that this was rarely discussed or expressed. (10)

There is, of course, little oral evidence from the working class in the Black Country in the nineteenth century, but occasional glimpses of working class attitudes to marriage can be found in press reports of marriages in crisis, when witnesses in court gave evidence against their partners, or explained their behaviour in their own defence. A wife who had been assaulted by her husband in February 1880 maintained that she wished to live separately from him because he had not married her for love. (11) Once married, wives were probably loyal to their husbands, although perhaps not all would have gone as far as the Sedgley wife who fought a miner on his behalf when he was challenged to a fight in February 1875. (12) Many working class wives in the Black Country were badly treated by their husbands, and newspapers of the second half of the century record details of numerous assaults by husbands on wives, as well as husbands deserting the family home and leaving their wives to the mercy of the Poor Law. In many of these court cases the wives ask the court to dismiss the charges they had brought against their husbands, or at least to deal with them leniently, even though their husbands had previous convictions for assault. It is not difficult to understand the dilemma faced by many of these abused wives for how could they maintain themselves and their families without their husbands, however badly they behaved? These court cases of marriages in crisis reinforce the view of how important it was for working class wives not only to marry, but to remain married, since the alternative for most was the workhouse. (13) The little oral evidence which exists of the reminiscences of Black Country people supports such notions. George Dunn was born in 1887 and later became a chainmaker, and amidst his reminiscences of his mother, whom he regarded in an affectionate light, he remembered that Black Country mothers would not forsake their children whatever their husbands might do to them:

I've seen some terrible things 'appen to women; I've seen men 'alf kill 'em, only barely left 'em alive, but they wouldn't forsake their kids.

(14)

Certainly working class husbands in the Black Country received plenty of exhortation from religious moralists like the Reverend J.F.Moody who preached throughout the Black Country in 1862, telling his hearers that it was their wives who restrained the evils passions in man, and without whom men would *"sorry living lumps of humanity"*. (15) The upwardly mobile working class were, however, perfectly capable of morally exhorting their fellows, as the winning essayists did in 1862 when asked to write about the best ways to improve the moral social and religious condition of their own class. The winning essay, written by a metalworker, stressed the need for husbands to give their wives kinder treatment, but saved his worst criticism for Black Country wives who did not understand how to manage their households, how to cook, sew or wash , or how to bring up children fit for the world, and who needed the benefit of special schools where the middle class could prepare them for married life. (16)

(b) Levels of nuptiality

While this very thin impressionistic evidence may explain why there was a general climate in favour of marrying and why coalminers in particular were regarded as a good catch, it can shed little light on either levels of nuptiality, or the age at which women were marrying and these are crucial variables in setting levels of fertility. Nor can this evidence establish whether there were any changes in the second half of the nineteenth century in age of marriage which might be used to explain higher fertility and the subsequent increase in family size referred to earlier in the chapter. There may have been particular sets of household formation rules operating within communities or settlements at different points in time and these would have affected the age of marriage. Isolating and identifying these rules is far from easy, to say nothing of the difficulties in trying to decide to what extent such rules were changed as communities were altered by the effects of short-distance migration.

Jane Lewis has used the published Census statistics for England and Wales as a whole in 1881 to support her view that *"marriage remained the normative expectation of women of all classes"* in the nineteenth century, and she quotes a figure of 63.3% of women aged over fifteen being married, and a figure of 87.7% of the women aged between 45 and 49 being married. (17) In Lower Gornal the figures for those women

married to coalminers and for the working class a whole are presented in Table 6.1 below.

Table 6.1 Proportion of Women Married: Lower Gornal 1851 and 1891

	Coalminer Households		Other Working-Class Households	
	Aged over 15	Aged 45-9	Aged over 15	Aged 45-9
1851	78.4%	100.0%	71.1%	95.8%
1891	72.3%	100.0%	70.3%	100.0%

Sources: Census Enumerators' Books 1851; Registration District Dudley; PRO Microfilm No. HO 1072030
Census Enumerators' Books 1891; Registrar's District Dudley; PRO Microfiche 12/2291 and 12/2292

Although these figures are for working class wives only, they accord well with Jane Lewis's figures for the population of England and wales as whole. The figures of 78.4% of the female coalminer population and 71.1% of working class females over fifteeen being married in 1851, are obviously higher than Jane Lewis's figure of 63.3% for 1881, but this is not really surprising since working-class women had little means of independent support outside either their own family or marriage. This had not changed by 1891: the figures above, 72.3% of the coalminer population and 70.3% of the working class over fifteen, show that marriage was the normal experience for adult women, certainly in the second half of the nineteenth century. This notion can be reinforced by comparing the rates of nuptiality in Lower Gornal in both 1851 and 1891 with data collected from the Census nationally. In 1851 in coalminer households, for the 20-24 age group of women, the nuptiality rate was 643 per 1000; in working class households generally it was even higher at 661 per 1000. These figures compare with a rate of 313 per 1000 for all females aged 20-24 in England and Wales in 1851. By 1891 the figures for Lower Gornal had fallen to 578 and 436 per 1000 respectively for women married to coalminers and to working-class men in general, while the national rate had fallen to 299 per 1000. (18) Obviously the

comparison needs to be qualified since the Lower Gornal figures are for working class women only, whereas those for England and Wales are for all classes of women, but it does serve to emphasise the importance of marriage for all women, and especially for those of the working class. If marriage was the normative experience for women of all classes in the nineteenth century, then it was imperative for the working class in particular. The comparison also shows that the working class in Lower Gornal were conforming to the overall trend of falling nuptiality in the second half of the nineteenth century even though the rate remained high. Nuptiality amongst the working class women aged 20-24 in particular had fallen quite sharply between 1851 and 1891 and since migration and an adverse sex-ratio can be dismissed as the likely causes of this, it would seem that the explanation must lie in a growth of occupational opportunity for women in this age group which was delaying their marriages. (19)

Table 6.2 below presents the data of nuptiality in Cradley in both 1851 and 1891. The levels of nuptiality among both the coalminer and the working-class population generally were high in 1851 and 1891, as they were in Lower Gornal at the same dates.

Table 6.2 Proportion of Women Married: Cradley 1851 and 1891

	Coalminer Households		Other Working-Class Households	
	Aged over 15	Aged 45-9	Aged over 15	Aged 45-9
1851	84.0%	(a)	75.3%	100.0%
1891	74.1%	100.0%	69.7%	100.0%

Notes: (a) there were no married women in the coalminer households in this age group in 1851

Sources: Census Enumerators' Books 1851; Registrar's District Halesowen; PRO Microfilm No HO 1072034
Census Enumerators' Books 1891; Registrar's District Stourbridge; Sub-District Halesowen; PRO Microfiche 375 1B

They also show the same falling trend as in Lower Gornal between 1851 and 1891. The nuptiality rates of the 20-24 female age group in 1851 were also high, with 800

per 1000 married in the coalminer households, and 640 per 1000 in the working class households generally. By 1891 these figures had fallen to 579 per 1000 married in the coalminer households, and 619 in the working class. Again, the downward trend of the figures mirrors that in Lower Gornal, the only difference being that in Lower Gornal the bigger fall was recorded among the working class females, whilst in Cradley the bigger fall was among the females from coalminer households. This difference could, however, easily be attributable to the smallness of the coalminer sample skewing the results. This nuptiality data for Cradley serves to reinforce the notion that marriage was the normal experience of nearly all working class adult females. The falling nuptiality rates of the 20-24 age group from both types of household may be attributed, again, to the opportunities for and the levels of participation in paid employment by young females. These levels are examined later in this Chapter.

(d) Age of marriage

Although the data above has revealed that marriage was the common experience of working class men and women, it sheds no light on the actual ages of marriage. Some idea of age of marriage over a period of time can be obtained by examining the Marriage Registers of churches in a particular settlement over a period of time. This does raise the obvious problem of reliability. If Anglican registers are used then the sample of working-class marriages obtained from the registers in any particular settlement may not be typical of the working class in general, some of whom may have chosen to get married in nonconformist churches. Moreover, there is no way of knowing whether those marrying in a particular church then chose to live in the same settlement, or whether they were still resident at the period being studied. Thus the figures obtained will only give an approximation to reality: the age at which those coalminers and their wives who chose to marry in a particular place were actually marrying. There is, however, no reason to think that this group would be significantly different to other groups of coalminers in other working-class communities, unless of course, a different set of household formation rules applied in that particular settlement at that point in time in which case any figures and subsequent analysis may be badly distorted.

(a) Lower Gornal

The data series obtained from one marriage register, that of St.James, Lower Gornal,

for the period 1840-1900 is presented in Tables 6.3 and 6.4 below. The methodology adopted in the thesis so far, of examining the coalminer population separate from the rest of the working class, has been followed here also. The data is based on a sample taken at five year intervals from 1840 to 1910 in order to give a long data series, and only coalminers and other working-class men who were shown as resident in Lower Gornal at the time of their marriage, and the women they married, were included.

The figures in Tables 6.3 show that for the coalminers most marriages were made before the age of twenty-five, with 72.4% of the men and 85.0% of their wives marrying before this age, with only 6 out of the of 213 women, or 2.8% of the sample, being over the age of twenty-nine. A similar picture of working class marriages in general is shown in Table 5.4, with 67.6% of the men and 76.9% of the women marrying before they were twenty-five. The figures in these Tables do, however, highlight some important differences in nuptiality between the coalminers and the rest of the working class. While for working-class men in general, marriage under the age of twenty was quite rare, with only 2.4% of the sample being married at this early age, for the coalminers the figure is higher at 5.1%. This may provide some evidence for the notion highlighted by Peter Stearns that coalminers needed to marry early in order to regularise their illicit relationships with their future wives which had led to early pregnancies. (20) This, of course, does not explain why coalminers were more prone to illicit relationships which led to early pregnancies. Moreover, if coalminers were no different from the rest of the working class in their fondness for illicit relationships, it does not explain why more of their relationships led to early pregnancies than those of their working-class counterparts; unless the young women of the Black Country were more willing to allow themselves to become pregnant by coalminers than other working-class men because they saw them as potentially good husbands. This would certainly accord with the views expressed in the Broadside quoted above. Friedlander argued that coalminers needed children as insurance in old age, which for many miners came early because of the rigours of the job. If this is true, then it may well have been a fairly common practice to make sure that an intended wife was actually capable of bearing children before a miner would commit himself to marriage. (21) It does not, however, explain why miners should have felt the need to test out potential wives at quite such an early age. Moreover, even if miners could see the possible economic advantages of large families as a means of avoiding the humiliation of the dreaded poor law in later life, and the present writer is not really convinced by this argument, then

Table 6:3 (a) **Age at Marriage 1840–1910 of Coalminers and their Wives: St.James' Church Lower Gornal**

	15–19		20–24		25–29		30–34		35–39		40–44		Over 45		Totals		
	m	f	m	f	m	f	m	f	m	f	m	f	m	f	m	f	
1840															0	0	
1845		1	1	1	1										2	2	
1850		2	3	2	2	1									5	5	
1855	1			1		1	1								2	2	
1860	2	4	7	6	1										10	10	
1865	1	9	18	16	6	3	4	1	1						30	29	
1870	3	7	28	28	9	7	3	1			1				44	43	(b)
1875	2	3	6	4				1							8	8	
1880	1	2	15	16	4	1	1	1							21	20	(b)
1885		2	10	12	6	2				1					16	17	(b)
1890	1	5	18	13	4	5	1	1							24	24	
1895			7	9	3	2	1								11	11	
1900		2	16	19	5										21	21	
1905		2	8	5	1	3	1								10	10	
1910			8	10	3	1									11	11	
Totals	11	39	145	142	45	26	12	5	1	1	1	0	0	0	215	213	
% of Males	*5.1*		*67.4*		*20.9*		*5.6*		*0.5*		*0.5*		*0.0*		*100.0*		
% of Females		*18.3*		*66.7*		*12.2*		*2.3*		*0.5*		*0.0*		*0.0*		*100.0*	

Notes: (a) Only coalminers resident in Lower Gornal at the time of their marriages were included in the sample. Only those women marrying coalminers resident in Lower Gornal were included.
(b) The disparity in the numbers is caused by the inclusion of marriages to widows and widowers whose age at first marriage is not known

Source: Marriage Registers of St.James, Lower Gornal 1840-1910; Dudley Library Microfilms 420, 421, 422

Table 6.4 (a) **Age at Marriage 1840–1910: Working class men and their wives: St.James' Church Lower Gornal**

	15–19		20–24		25–29		30–34		35–39		40–44		Over 45		Totals		
	m	f	m	f	m	f	m	f	m	f	m	f	m	f	m	f	
1840				2	2										2	2	
1845								1			1				1	1	
1850		3	10	7				1			1				11	11	
1855			1	2	2	1									3	3	
1860		1	6	9	3		2	1							11	11	
1865	1	11	14	6	7	4	4	3	1						27	24	(b)
1870	1	8	26	25	8	9	3	5	3	1	1				42	48	(b)
1875			7	10	6	2		2	1			2			14	16	(b)
1880	2	12	32	29	7	5	5	1			1				47	47	
1885	1	6	23	23	12	6	1	2							37	37	
1890	1	1	1	2	2	1				1					4	5	(b)
1895		3	7	4											7	7	
1900		3	12	10	3	2									15	15	
1905		2	11	8	3	4									14	14	
1910			8	7	3	4									11	11	
Totals	6	50	158	144	58	38	15	16	5	2	4	2	0	0	246	252	
% of Males	*2.4*		*64.2*		*23.6*		*6.1*		*2.0*		*1.6*		*0.0*		*100.0*		
% of Females		*19.8*		*57.1*		*15.1*		*6.3*		*0.8*		*0.8*		*0.0*		*100.0*	

Notes: (a) Only working class men resident in Lower Gornal at the time of their marriages were included in the sample. Only those women marrying these men were included, even though they themselves might not have been residents of Lower Gornal at the time of their marriage.
(b) The disparity in numbers is caused by the inclusion of marriages to widows and widowers whose age at first marriage is not known

Source: Marriage Registers of St.James, Lower Gornal 1840-1910; Dudley Library Microfilms 420, 421, 422

surely, workers in othert occupations would have reached similar conclusions. There is no reason to think that men in other occupations saw the advantages of marrying fertile women, but then adopted a different attitude towards marriage in this respect.

If attention is focussed on the women who married coalminers and those who married other working-class men, some important differences in nuptiality between them can be seen. The proportion of women under twenty in the sample who married working-class men other than coalminers is even larger than the coalminer sample, 19.8% compared to 18.3%, and at face value it seems that working class women in general in this part of the Black Country were very willing to marry early, even if their future husband was not a coalminer. It would seem that this limited evidence points to the fact that a sizeable proportion of working-class women were keen to marry early, irrespective of their husbands' occupation, and in this respect the coalminer community behaved like the rest of the working-class community with whom they lived. The evidence in the above Tables shows that the vast majority of working-class women married at some time between their twentieth and twenty-fifth birthdays: 66.7% of the women who married coalminers, and 57.1% of working class women in general. However, a strange anomaly then emerges in that, while women marrying working-class men other than coalminers preferred to marry very early (under twenty) like their counterparts marrying coalminers, more of them then delayed their marriages, often until they were over thirty, whereas nearly all those women marrying coalminers had done so by the time they had reached thirty. Thus, overall, the notion that coalminers preferred young brides would seem to hold true, although in marrying very young brides under twenty, they shared this fondness with the rest of the working class. That some of the women who eventually married working-class men other than coalminers may have had to delay their marriages can be put forward as part of the reason for their lower apparent fertility and smaller overall family size discussed earlier in this chapter.

The data obtained from the marriage registers can also be used to find a mean age of marriage, and to see if there was any change during the second half of the nineteenth century. Using the same sampling methodology and separation of data for coalminers from that of the working class in general, this is presented in Table 6.5 and Charts 6.1 and 6.2 below. Since so few working class men over 35 or women over 30 appear in the Marriage Registers, the figures in the Table are age-specific with the figures for women marrying under twenty-five, thirty and thirty-five being included. The inclusion of extreme ages of marriage would have skewed the results since the mean is very sensitive to the inclusion of such extreme variables, especially when the samples for some years were quite small.

Table 6.5 Mean Age at First Marriage: Lower Gornal 1840-1910

Years	Coalminers		Wives		Working-Class Men		Wives	
	Under 35	Under 35	Under 30	Under 25	Under 35	Under 35	Under 30	Under 25
1840 (a)	(b)	(b)	(b)	(b)	26.5	22.0	22.0	22.0
1845 (a)	23.0	19.5	19.5	19.5	(c)	(c)	(c)	(c)
1850 (a)	24.2	21.8	21.8	20.3	21.4	21.0	20.1	20.1
1855 (a)	25.5	24.5	24.5	22.0	23.7	23.7	23.7	23.0
1860	21.4	20.6	20.6	20.6	24.6	22.7	22.0	22.0
1865	24.0	21.6	21.3	20.6	24.5	22.7	21.5	20.5
1870	23.0	21.9	21.7	20.8	23.3	23.1	22.1	20.5
1875	21.1	21.1	19.9	19.9	24.4	23.9	22.7	21.5
1880	22.8	21.8	21.2	20.8	23.3	21.3	21.0	20.4
1885	22.7	21.7	21.5	21.1	22.9	22.7	22.7	21.0
1890	22.4	22.5	22.1	20.3	23.3	21.8	21.8	19.6
1895	23.3	22.3	22.3	21.7	21.7	20.1	20.1	20.1
1900	23.2	21.7	21.7	21.7	23.0	22.0	22.0	21.3
1905	23.2	22.5	22.5	20.1	23.4	23.0	23.0	21.2
1910	23.2	22.0	22.0	21.4	23.8	23.4	23.4	22.0
Means	**23.0**	**21.8**	**21.6**	**20.8**	**23.6**	**22.5**	**21.8**	**20.9**

Notes:
(a) these means were based on very small numbers of marriages
(b) there were no coalminers married in St.James's in 1840
(c) there was only one marriage of a working class couple in 1845 and their ages make them unrepresentative and consequently this data was not included in the Table since it would have skewed the mean

Source: Marriage Regsiters of St.James, Lower Gornal 1840-1910; Dudley Library Microfilm 420,421,422

The answer to two important questions might be sought from the data presented above: first, were there any significant differences in the age of marriage between the coalminers and the working class generally which could account for the increased fertility of the coalminers; and secondly, was there any significant change in the age of marriage in the second half of the nineteenth century which might account for the apparent increased fertility in coalminer families by 1891?

The first of these questions is fairly easy to answer from the data: between 1840 and 1910 there was a difference between the mean age at which both coalminers and the working class in general married, and for their wives. There was a mean difference of 0.6 years between the age at which coalminers and working class men in general under 35 were marrying: 23.0 compared to 23.6. Not only did coalminers prefer young brides but they also married young themselves. Interestingly, this figure for working class men is considerably different from the mean age of marriage of the autobiographers examined by David Vincent, most of whom married around 26 years of age. Vincent does admit, however, that they were not a statistically accurate sample. (22) The figures are also considerably different from those produced by Outhwaite from the Registrar-General's statistics for the years 1839-41, of 25.5 years for men. The corresponding figure for females was 24.3 years. (23)

More importantly for the question of comparative fertility and family size is the difference in the mean age of marriage between those women marrying coalminers and those marrying working-class men in general. For those women who married before they were twenty-five there is little difference in the mean age of marriage: 20.8 years for women who married coalminers and 20.9 for those who married other working class men. As the older age groups are included in the mean the differential becomes greater. For those women who married before they were thirty the differential is small, with women marrying coalminers only 0.2 years earlier than those who married other working-class men. This would hardly be a sufficient differential to explain the greater apparent fertility and family size in coalminer households. However, since more of the women who married working-class men did so later than their counterparts marrying coalminers, it is more realistic to examine a wider age group and include all women marrying under 35 years of age. Table 6.5 above shows the differential in these groups of women to be 0.7 years and this can certainly provide a partial explanation, admittedly small, for the differences in apparent fertility and family size in coalminer and working-class households. In other words, in Lower Gornal in the second half of the nineteenth century, more of the women who married coalminers were able to start their families at a slightly earlier age than those who married working-class men generally, and this helps to explain the differences in their family demography, especially the differences in apparent fertility and family size. This analysis has also assumed that only married women had children, which was obviously not the case. Attention was drawn earlier, however, to the very small number of illegitimate children recorded in the Census enumeration for both Lower Gornal and Cradley. The paucity of recorded illegitimate births may, of course, not reflect the real situation amongst the working-class population, but recovering unrecorded illegitimate children from the

Enumerators' Books would require a lot of guesswork, and has, therefore, not been attempted.

How do these figures compare with coalminers as a whole and with coalminers from different areas? R.Outhwaite quotes an age of marriage of 24.1 for coalminers as a whole, and 22.5 for their wives in the mid-1880's, showing that, in Lower Gornal, coalminers were not only marrying earlier than the working class in general, but also earlier than coalminers nationally. (24) Mary Mills' study of the settlement of Cannock in 1881 revealed mean ages of marriage of 24.6 for the coalminers and 21.9 for their wives, while in the newer *"frontier"* settlement of Chasetown the figures were 23.3 and 21.0 respectively. (25) Thus the figures in Tables 6.3 and 6.4 above show that coalminers in this area of the Black Country married earlier than their counterparts further north in Staffordshire, while there was little difference in the age at which their wives married in the two areas. This earlier age of marriage for those women marrying coalminers in Lower Gornal in the second half of the nineteenth century must certainly form part of the explanation for the greater apparent fertility and family size in coalminer households than that in working-class households in general.

The answer to the second question posed above is not so easy to tease from the data. Charts 6.1and 6.2 below plot the changes in mean age of marriage between 1840 and 1910. The mean ages of marriage of those marrying under thirty-five for the period 1840-1910 have been superimposed onto the data series. The data for working- class marriages does show overall that the mean age of marriage of a sample collected at five year intervals for both men and women fluctuated widely throughout the period. There were several wide variations from the mean for the working class men: before 1855, between 1860 and 1865, in 1875 and again in 1895. The overall trend seems to have been a rising age of marriage to 1875, followed by a fall. The wide variations from the mean for their wives were also before 1855, in 1880, and again in 1895. Again, the overall trend in the period seems to have been a rising age of marriage to 1875, followed by a fall, with a rising pattern again by 1895. There is a similarity in the trends of the age of marriage of both working-class men and their wives between 1840 and 1910. It could tentatively be suggested that these rises and falls in the mean ages of marriage were reflecting improvements and deteriorations in standard of living in the second half of the nineteenth century. Improvements in the standard of living allowed working-class men, who were particularly susceptible to fluctuations in economic conditions, to leave home and set up homes of their own at slightly younger ages than had been possible earlier in the century. These suggestions are largely supported by recent research by Humphrey Southall and David Gilbert which

Chart 6.1

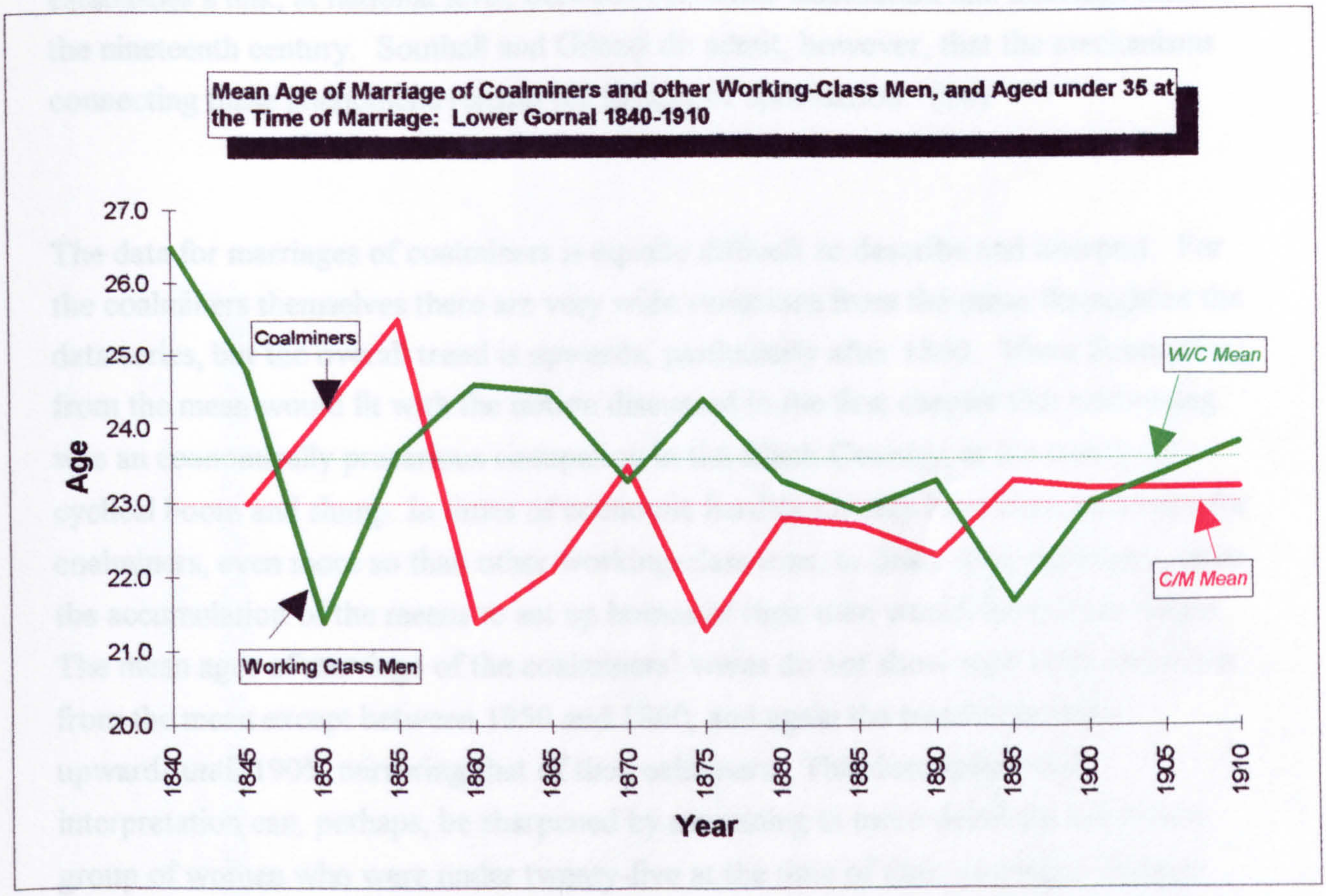
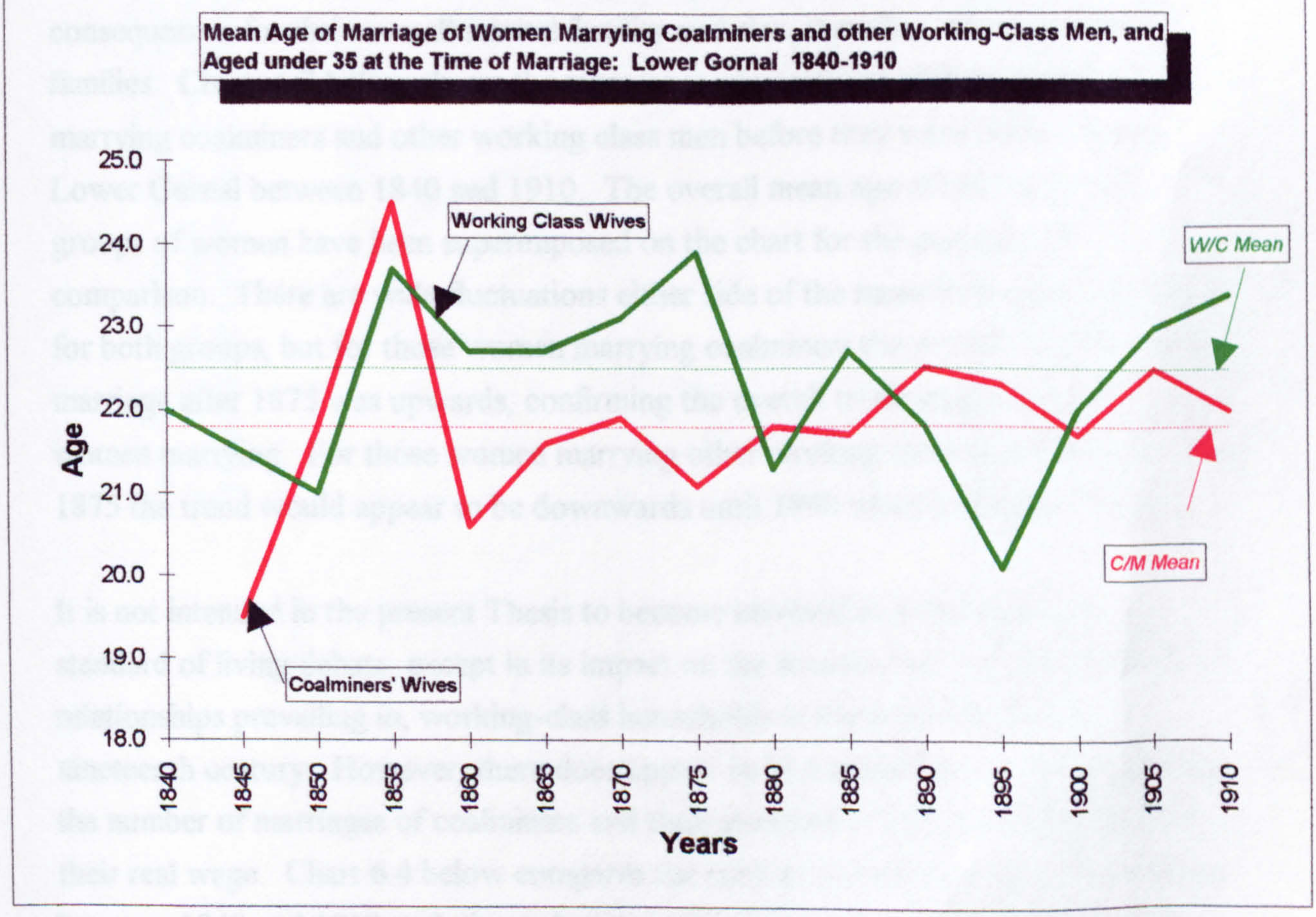


Chart 6.2



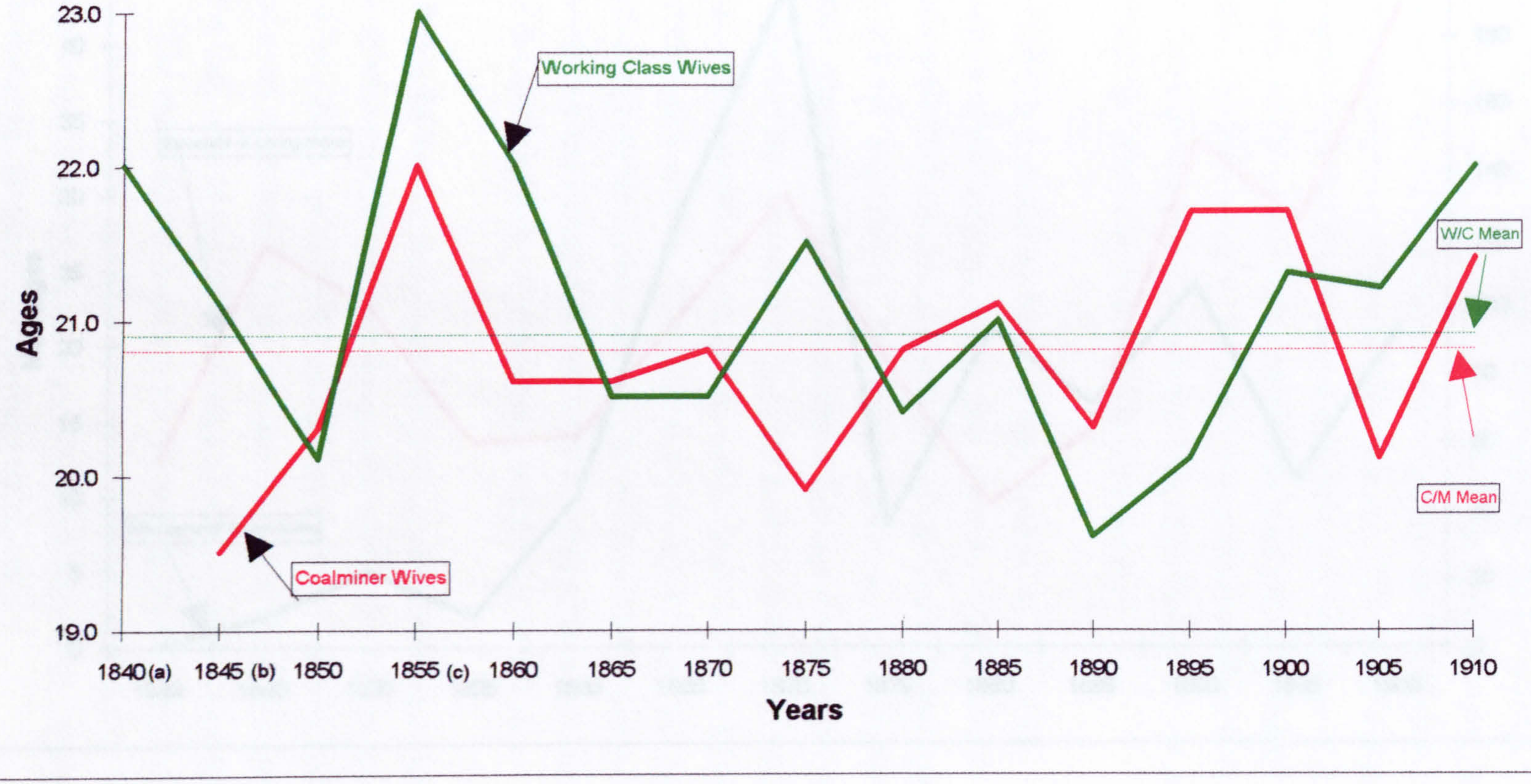
Source: Marriage Registers of St.James's, Lower Gornal 1840-1910; Dudley Library Microfilms 420,421.422

establishes a link, at national level, between economic fluctuation and marriage rates in the nineteenth century. Southall and Gilbert do admit, however, that the mechanisms connecting these phenomena remain the subject of speculation. (26)

The data for marriages of coalminers is equally difficult to describe and interpret. For the coalminers themselves there are very wide variations from the mean throughout the data series, but the overall trend is upwards, particularly after 1860. These fluctuations from the mean would fit with the notion discussed in the first chapter that coalmining was an economically precarious occupation in the Black Country, at the mercy of cyclical boom and slump. In times of economic hardship it may have been necessary for coalminers, even more so than other working-class men, to delay their marriages, since the accumulation of the means to set up homes of their own would have taken longer. The mean ages of marriage of the coalminers' wives do not show such wide variations from the mean except between 1850 and 1860, and again the trend is probably upwards until 1905, mirroring that of the coalminers. This description and interpretation can, perhaps, be sharpened by examining in more detail the important group of women who were under twenty-five at the time of their marriages: the age group in which the bulk of marriages originated in the second half of the nineteenth century. Delayed marriages for this group of women may have had important consequences for their overall marital fertility and also, therefore, the size of their families. Charts 6.3 below shows the mean ages of marriages of those women marrying coalminers and other working class men before they were twenty-five in Lower Gornal between 1840 and 1910. The overall mean age of marriage for both groups of women have been superimposed on the chart for the purposes of comparison. There are wide fluctuations either side of the mean throughout the period for both groups, but for those women marrying coalminers the overall trend in age of marriage after 1875 was upwards, confirming the overall trend suggested earlier for all women marrying. For those women marrying other working class men, however, after 1875 the trend would appear to be downwards until 1890 when it did begin to rise.

It is not intended in the present Thesis to become involved in a discussion of the standard of living debate, except in its impact on the structure of, and the attitudes and relationships prevailing in, working-class households in the second half of the nineteenth century. However, there does appear to be a correlation at least between the number of marriages of coalminers and their standard of living as represented by their real wage. Chart 6.4 below compares the number of marriages in Lower Gornal between 1840 and 1910 with the real wages of coalminers as calculated by George

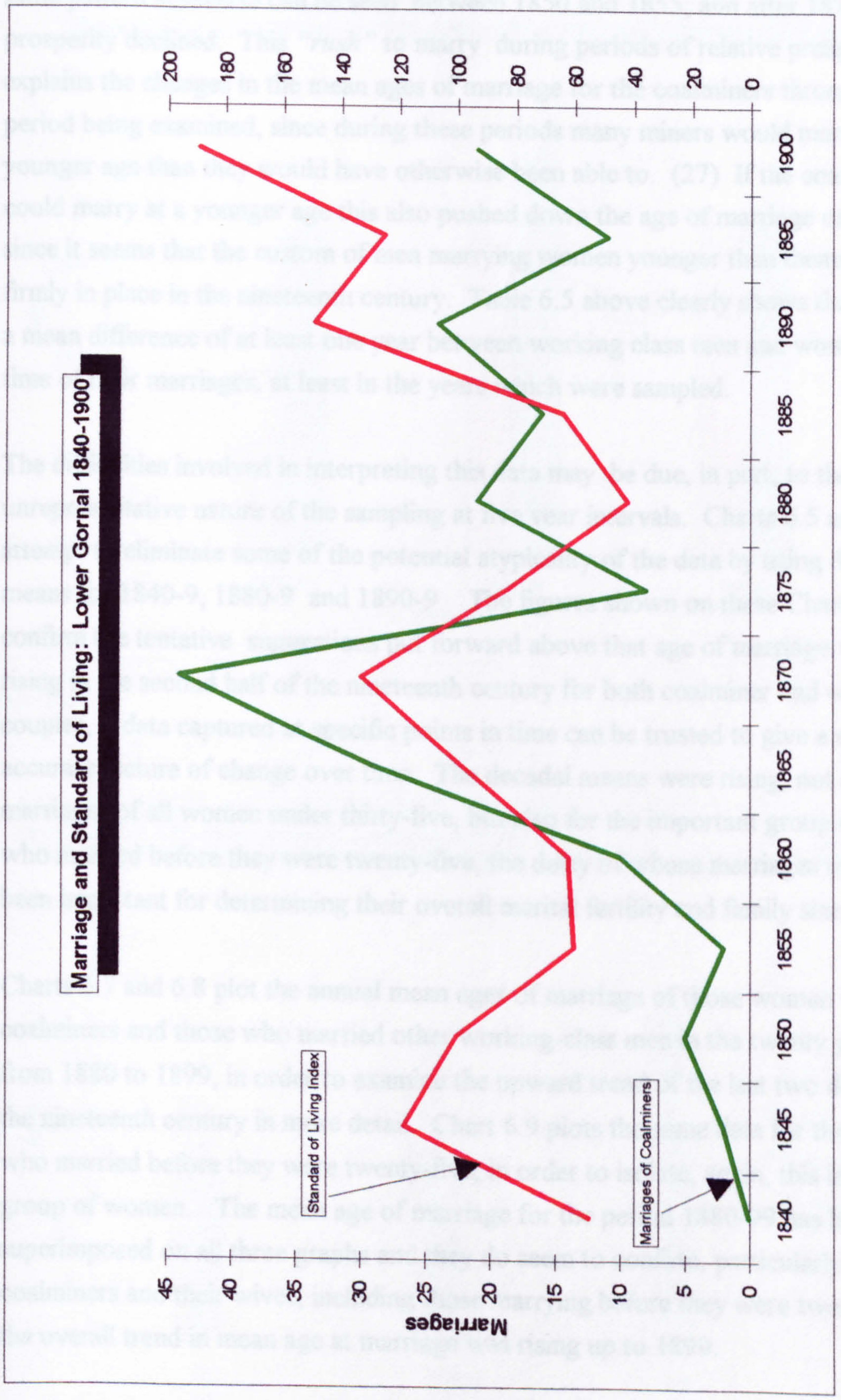
Mean Age of Marriage of Women Marrying Coalminers and other Working Class Men, and aged under 25 at the Time of Marriage: Lower Gornal 1840-1910



Notes:
(a) In 1840 there were no marriages of coalminers and only 2 of working class women under 25
(b) In 1845 there were only 2 coalminer marriages and no marriages of other working class women under 25
(c) In 1855 there was only 1 coalminer marriage and 2 other working class marriages of women under 25

Source: Marriage Registers of St.James, Lower Gornal 1840-1910; Dudley Library Microfilms 420, 421,422

Chart 6.4



Notes: The Standard of Living Index is that for real wages corrected for unemployment; 1850=100

Sources: Marriage Registers of St.James, Lower Gornal 1840-1900; Dudley Library Microfilms 420,421,422

G.Barnsby, *Social Conditions in the Black Country 1800-1900,* pp.222-4

Barnsby. As relative prosperity increased in the late 1840's, between 1860 and 1870, and significantly after 1880, so there was a corresponding increase in marriages. The same pattern in reverse can be seen: between 1850 and 1855; and after 1870 as relative prosperity declined. This *"rush"* to marry during periods of relative prosperity explains the changes in the mean ages of marriage for the coalminers throughout the period being examined, since during these periods many miners would marry at a younger age than they would have otherwise been able to. (27) If the coalminers could marry at a younger age this also pushed down the age of marriage of their wives since it seems that the custom of men marrying women younger than themselves was firmly in place in the nineteenth century. Table 6.5 above clearly shows that there was a mean difference of at least one year between working class men and women at the time of their marriages, at least in the years which were sampled.

The difficulties involved in interpreting this data may be due, in part, to the unrepresentative nature of the sampling at five year intervals. Charts 6.5 and 6.6 attempt to eliminate some of the potential atypicality of the data by using decadal means for 1840-9, 1880-9 and 1890-9. The figures shown on these Charts do confirm the tentative suggestions put forward above that age of marriage was slowly rising in the second half of the nineteenth century for both coalminer and working-class couples, if data captured at specific points in time can be trusted to give a reasonably accurate picture of change over time. The decadal means were rising, not only for marriages of all women under thirty-five, but also for the important group of women who married before they were twenty-five, the delay of whose marriages may have been important for determining their overall marital fertility and family size.

Charts 6.7 and 6.8 plot the annual mean ages of marriage of those women who married coalminers and those who married other working-class men in the twenty year period from 1880 to 1899, in order to examine the upward trend of the last two decades of the nineteenth century in more detail. Chart 6.9 plots the same data for those women who married before they were twenty-five, in order to isolate, again, this important group of women. The mean age of marriage for the period 1880-99 has been superimposed on all three graphs and they do seem to confirm, particularly for the coalminers and their wives, including those marrying before they were twenty-five, that the overall trend in mean age at marriage was rising up to 1899.

If this interpretation of the data is correct then two contradictions become immediately apparent. The first of these is concerned with the connection between the ability to accumulate the means to marry and set up independent households and the age at

Chart 6.5

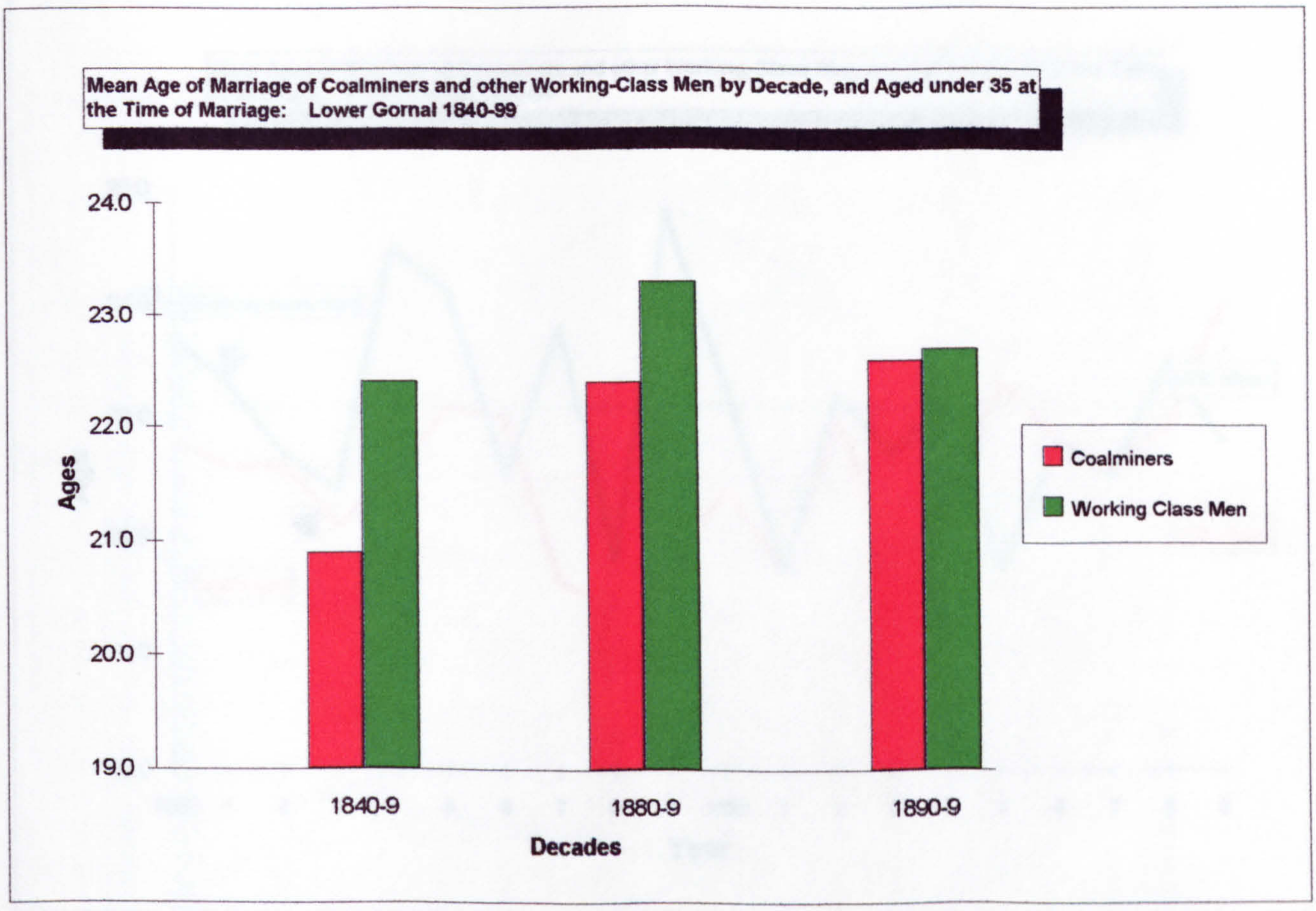
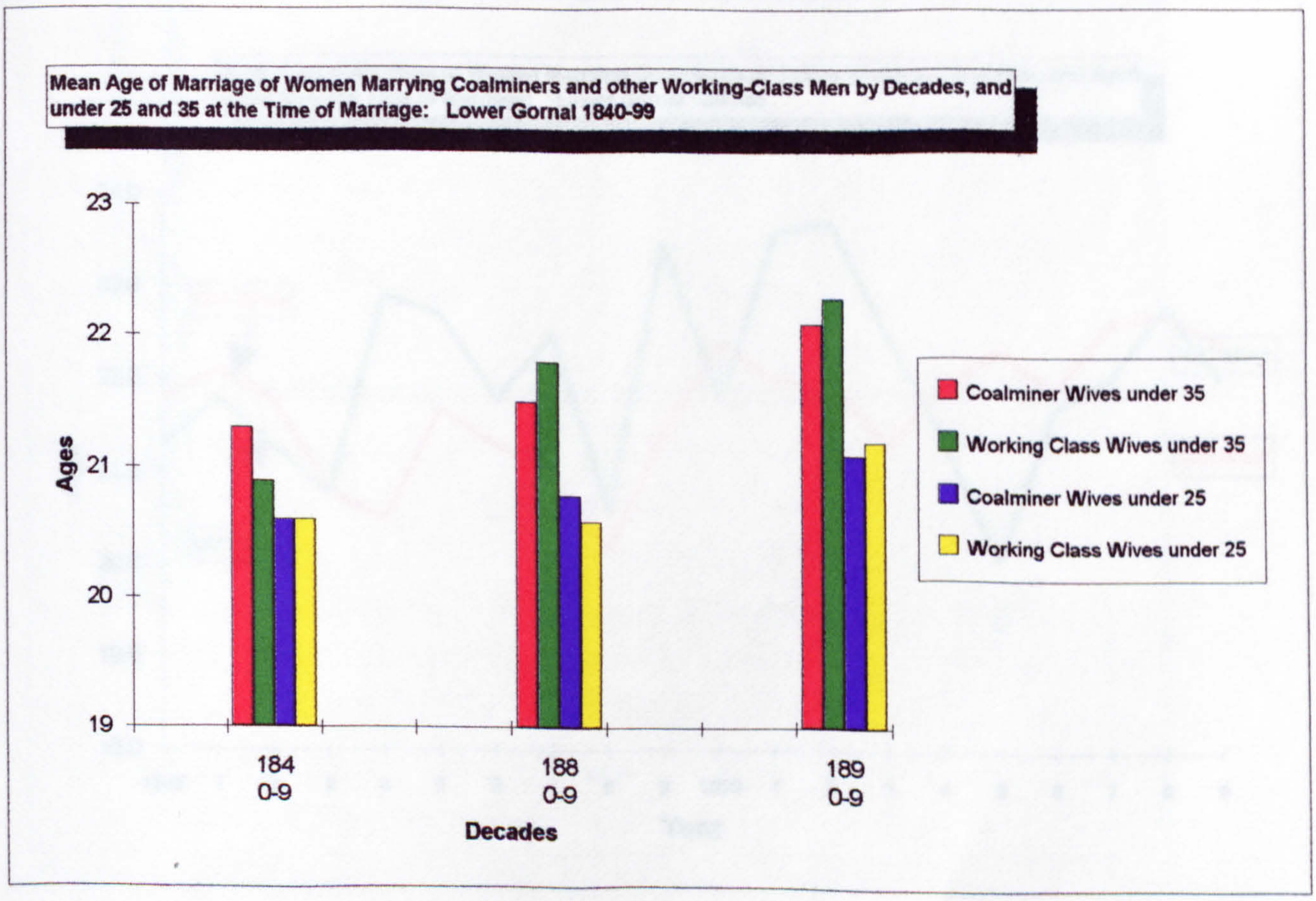


Chart 6.6



Source: Marriage Registers of St.James's, Lower Gornal 1840-1910; Dudley Library Microfilm 420,421,422

Chart 6.7

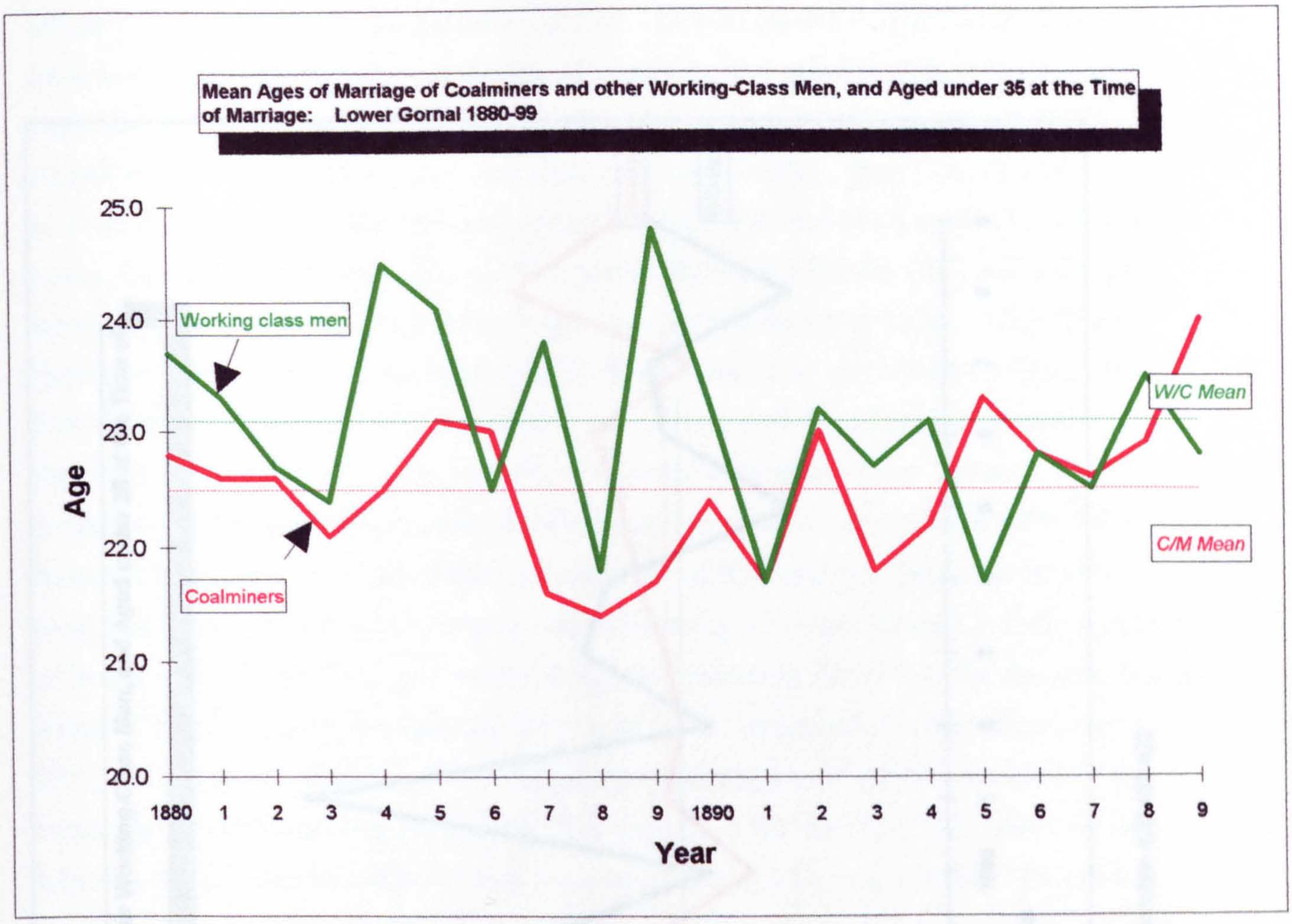
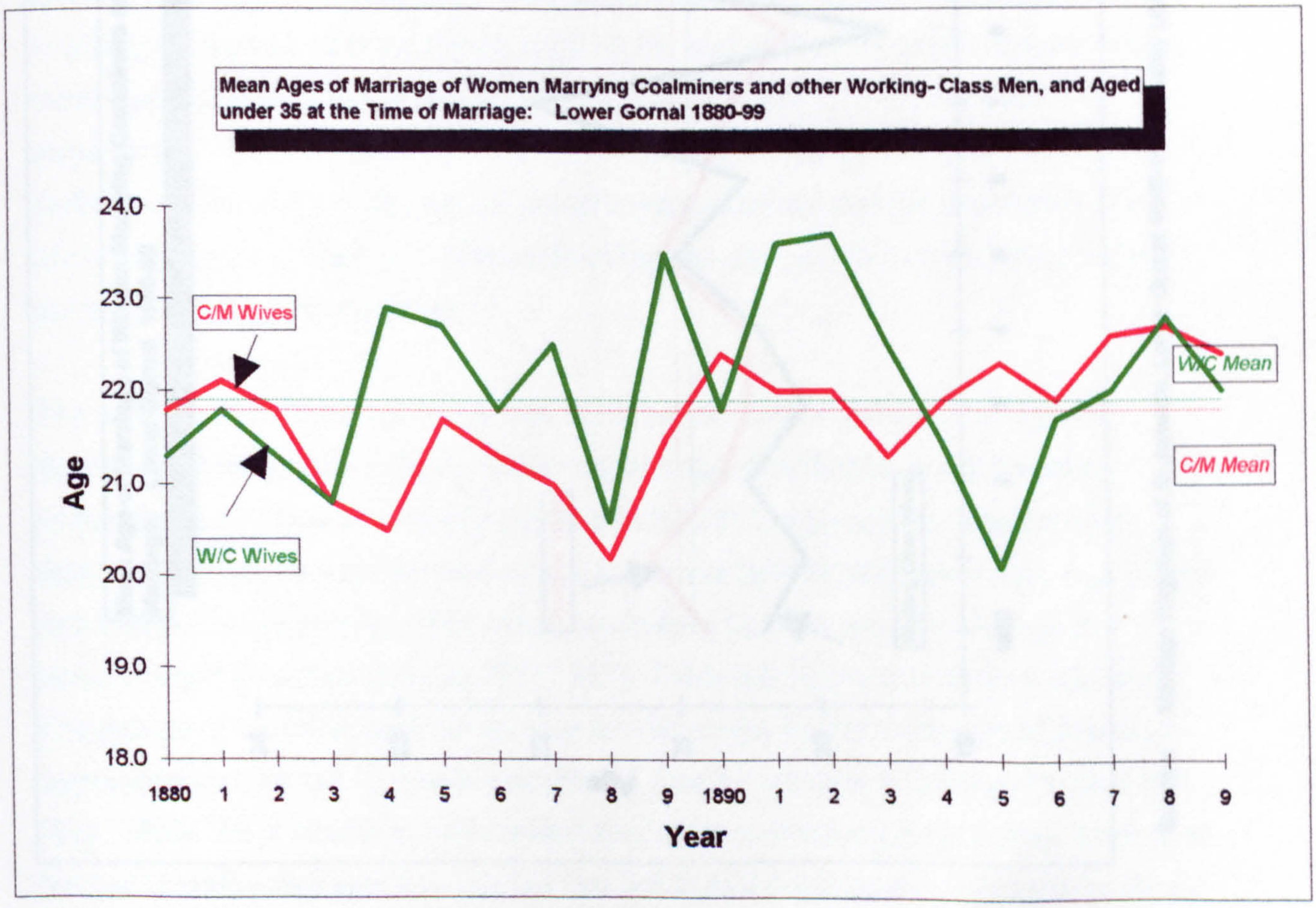
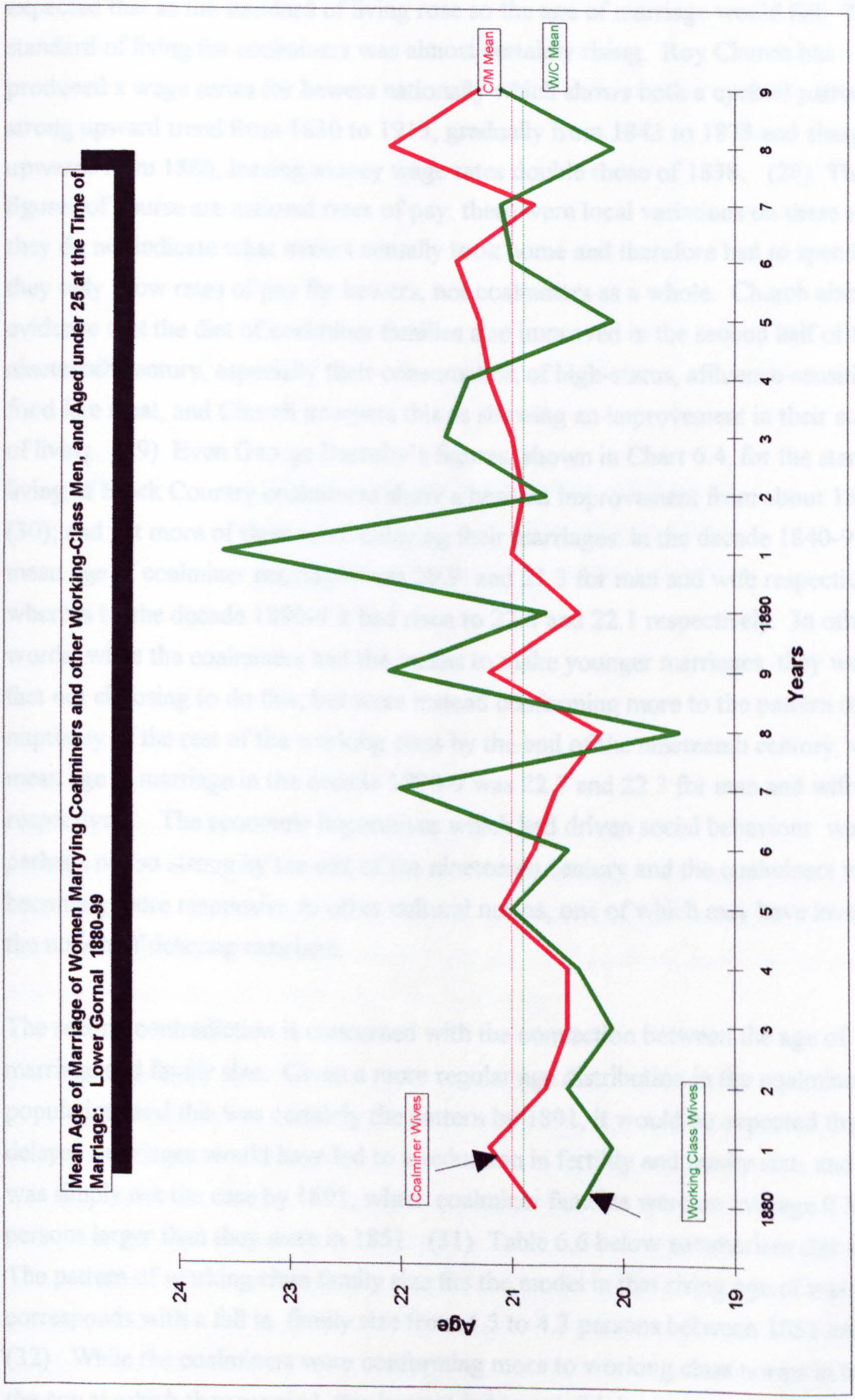


Chart 6.8



Source: Marriage Registers of St.James's, Lower Gornal 1840-1910; Dudley Library Microfilm 420,421,422

Chart 6.9



Source: Marriage Registers of St.James's, Lower Gornal 1840-1910; Dudley Library Microfilm 420,421,422

which working class couples actually married. In a socio-economic model which maintains a correlation between the age of marriage and relative affluence, it would be expected that as the standard of living rose so the age of marriage would fall. The standard of living for coalminers was almost certainly rising. Roy Church has produced a wage series for hewers nationally which shows both a cyclical pattern and a strong upward trend from 1830 to 1913, gradually from 1843 to 1873 and sharply upwards from 1886, leaving money wage rates double those of 1838. (28) These figures of course are national rates of pay: there were local variations on these rates; they do not indicate what miners actually took home and therefore had to spend; and they only show rates of pay for hewers, not coalminers as a whole. Church also quotes evidence that the diet of coalminer families also improved in the second half of the nineteenth century, especially their consumption of high-status, affluence-sensitive food like meat, and Church interpets this as showing an improvement in their standard of living. (29) Even George Barnsby's figures, shown in Chart 6.4, for the standard of living of Black Country coalminers show a hesitant improvement from about 1875 (30); and yet more of them were delaying their marriages: in the decade 1840-9 the mean age of coalminer marriages was 20.9 and 21.3 for man and wife respectively, whereas by the decade 1890-9 it had risen to 22.6 and 22.1 respectively. In other words, while the coalminers had the means to make younger marriages, they were in fact not choosing to do this, but were instead conforming more to the pattern of nuptiality of the rest of the working class by the end of the nineteenth century, whose mean age at marriage in the decade 1890-9 was 22.7 and 22.3 for man and wife respectively. The economic imperatives which had driven social behaviour were perhaps not so strong by the end of the nineteenth century and the coalminers were becoming more responsive to other cultural norms, one of which may have involved the notion of delaying marriage.

The second contradiction is concerned with the connection between the age of marriage and family size. Given a more regular age distribution in the coalminer population, and this was certainly the pattern by 1891, it would be expected that delayed marriages would have led to a reduction in fertility and family size, and yet this was simply not the case by 1891, when coalminer families were on average 0.3 persons larger than they were in 1851. (31) Table 6.6 below summarises this data. The pattern of working class family size fits the model in that rising age of marriage corresponds with a fall in family size from 4.5 to 4.3 persons between 1851 and 1891. (32) While the coalminers were conforming more to working class norms in terms of the age at which they married, this has not led to any fall in apparent fertility or family size by 1891.

Table 6.6 Family and Household Sizes: Lower Gornal 1851-91

	Nuclear Family		Household		Houseful	
	Coalminer	Working Class	Coalminer	Working Class	Coalminer	Working Class
1851	5.0	4.5	5.2	5.2	5.4	5.4
1881	5.2	4.4	5.5	4.7	5.7	5.0
1891	5.3	4.3	5.5	4.8	5.9	5.1

Sources: Census Enumerators' Books 1851; Registration District Dudley; PRO Microfilm No. HO 1072030
Census Enumerators' Books 1881; Registrar's District Dudley; Pro Microfilm 11/2873 and 11/2874
Census Enumerators' Books 1891; Registrar's District Dudley; PRO Microfiche 12/2291 and 12/2292

(b) Cradley

The data series obtained from the marriage registers of St. Peter's, Cradley, for the period 1850-1910 is presented in Tables 6.7 and 6.8 below. The methodology and sampling are the same as for Lower Gornal, with the exception that only marriages from 1850 have been included in the sample since before this date the age of marriage was simply recorded as *"under age"* or *"above age"* .

The vast bulk of all marriages involving coalminers were made before the age of twenty-five, with 90.4% of the men and 85.3% of their wives marrying before this age. The picture is similar, but not as stark for the working class in general, with 70.7% of the men and 77.0% of their wives marrying before they were twenty-five. More of the miners in Cradley had married before they were twenty-five than was the case in Lower Gornal, where they figure was 72.4%; but the figure for wives is very much in accord with that found in Lower Gornal, where 85.0% were married before they were twenty-five. The figures for the working class generally in Cradley show a remarkable similarity to those obtained for Lower Gornal at the same period. (33) Again, in Cradley marriage for working class men under twenty was quite rare, with only 3.0%

Table 6.7 **Age at Marriage 1850–1910 of Coalminers and their Wives: St.Peter's Church**
(a) (b) **Cradley**

	15–19		20–24		25–29		30–34		35–39		40–44		Over 45		**Totals**		
	m	f	m	f	m	f	m	f	m	f	m	f	m	f	m	f	
1850															0	0	
1855			3	3											3	3	
1860															0	0	
1865	1	1													1	1	
1870															0	0	
1875			2	2											2	2	
1880			1	1											1	1	
1885	1	1	1	1											2	2	
1890			4	4		1									4	5	(c)
1895		1	4	4	2										6	5	(c)
1900			4	4	1	2						1			5	7	(c)
1905			4	4											4	4	
1910		1	3	2								1			3	4	(c)
Totals	2	4	26	25	3	3	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	31	34	
% of Males	*6.5*		*83.9*		*9.7*		*0.0*		*0.0*		*0.0*		*0.0*		*100.0*		
% of Females		*11.8*		*73.5*		*8.8*		*0.0*		*0.0*		*5.9*		*0.0*		*100.0*	

Notes: (a) Only coalminers resident in Cradley at the time of their marriages were included in the sample. Only those women marrying coalminers resident in Cradley were included.
(b) Before 1850 no ages were recorded, only "full-age" or "under-age"
(c) The disparity in the numbers is caused by the inclusion of marriages to widows and widowers whose age at first marriage is not known

Source: Marriage Registers of St.Peter's, Cradley 1850-1910; Dudley Library Microfilms 360 and 361

Table 6.8 **Age at Marriage 1850--1910 of Working-Class Men and their Wives: St.Peter's Church Cradley**
(a) (b)

	15–19		20–24		25–29		30–34		35–39		40–44		Over 45		**Totals**		
	m	f	m	f	m	f	m	f	m	f	m	f	m	f	m	f	
1850		1	2	1											2	2	
1855		1	3	2	1										4	3	(c)
1860	1	4	9	6	2	2		1	1						13	13	
1865		2	4	3	1										5	5	
1870	1	6	12	8	2	2					1				16	16	
1875		3	5	3	1										6	6	
1880	1		7	9	1	1									9	10	(c)
1885		1	4	5	2		1	1							7	7	
1890			6	6	1	2	2			1					9	9	
1895	1	1	11	11	2	4	1	1			1				16	17	(c)
1900		4	25	24	9	3		1							34	32	(c)
1905	2	3	25	26	15	16	2	1	1						45	46	(c)
1910		2	21	22	8	8	2	1	1	1					32	34	(c)
Totals	6	28	134	126	45	38	8	6	3	2	2	0	0	0	198	200	
% of Males	*3.0*		*67.7*		*22.7*		*4.0*		*1.5*		*1.0*		*0.0*		*100.0*		
% of Females		*14.0*		*63.0*		*19.0*		*3.0*		*1.0*		*0.0*		*0.0*		*100.0*	

Notes: (a) Only coalminers resident in Cradley at the time of their marriages were included in the sample. Only those women marrying coalminers resident in Cradley were included.
(b) Before 1850 no ages were recorded, only "full-age" or "under-age"
(c) The disparity in the numbers is caused by the inclusion of marriages to widows and widowers whose age at first marriage is not known

Source: Marriage Registers of St.Peter's, Cradley 1850-1910; Dudley Library Microfilms 360 and 361

of the sample being married at this early age; while for the coalminers this figure is higher at 6.0%, supporting the notion that some miners either wanted to, were expected to, or had to get married at a relatively young age. Attention was drawn in the Lower Gornal data to both the relatively high proportion of women marrying under twenty, and to the fact that there was a greater proportion of women in this age group marrying working class men other than coalminers, 14.0%, compared to those who married coalminers, 11.8%. This would seem to confirm the suggestion tentatively put forward earlier that working class girls generally preferred to marry early, irrespective of the occupation of their prospective husbands. It was also noted earlier that a greater proportion of those women who married working class men, compared to those who married coalminers, actually delayed their marriages until they were over twenty-five, and some until they were over thirty: some 23.0% compared to 14.7% of the two groups respectively.

The mean ages of marriage in the sample years between 1850 and 1910 for both coalminers and other working class men and their wives are shown in Table 6.9 and Charts 6.10 and 6.11 below. In the Table the mean ages of marriage for women are age-specific showing those women who were under twenty-five, thirty and thirty-five at the time of their marriages. The Charts shows the changes in the mean of those aged under thirty-five at the time of the marriages. The answer to two important questions was sought from the data showing mean ages of marriage for Lower Gornal: were there any significant differences between the mean ages of marriage of coalminers and the working class generally; and secondly, was there any significant change in the age of marriage in the second half of the nineteenth century? There was a mean difference in the period 1850-1910 of 1.5 years between the age at which coalminers and working class men in general aged under thirty-five at the time of their marriage were marrying: 22.0 compared to 23.5.

More importantly for the question of comparative fertility and family size is the difference in the mean age of marriage between those women marrying coalminers and those marrying working class men in general. For those women who married before they were twenty-five there was only a difference of 0.1 of a year in the mean age of marriage: 20.9 years for women who married coalminers and 21.0 for those who married other working class men. The corresponding figures for Lower Gornal were 20.9 for both groups of women, and this comparison shows that there was a similarity in this aspect of working class behaviour both between different occupational groups and between different communities. However, as the older age groups are included in

Table 6.9 **Mean Age at First Marriage: Cradley 1850-1910**

Years	Coalminers	Wives			Working Class Men	Wives		
	Under 35	Under 35	Under 30	Under 25	Under 35	Under 35	Under 30	Under 25
1850 (a)					23.0	21.5	21.5	21.5
1855 (b)	22.3	20.7	20.7	20.7	22.8	21.0	21.0	21.0
1860 (a)					22.5	21.7	21.0	20.0
1865 (b)	19.0	18.0	18.0	18.0	23.4	20.6	20.6	20.6
1870 (a)					21.8	20.8	20.8	20.1
1875 (b)	21.0	20.0	20.0	20.0	22.3	20.3	20.3	20.3
1880 (b)	21.0	20.0	20.0	20.0	22.1	21.6	21.6	21.0
1885 (b)	19.0	18.5	18.5	18.5	25.0	22.2	21.4	21.4
1890	21.8	21.8	21.8	21.0	24.6	22.9	22.9	22.0
1895	22.8	21.0	21.0	21.0	23.8	21.5	20.8	20.7
1900	23.8	23.5	23.5	22.8	23.1	22.0	21.7	21.3
1905	21.5	21.3	21.3	21.3	24.2	23.5	23.3	21.5
1910	21.7	21.7	21.7	21.7	23.8	22.8	22.5	21.3
Means	**22.0**	**21.3**	**21.3**	**20.9**	**23.5**	**22.2**	**21.9**	**21.0**

Notes: (a) there were no coalminers married in St.Peter's in 1850, 1860 and 1870
(b) the means for the coalminers and their wives were based on very small numbers of marriages; and also for the working class in 1850 and 1855

Source: Marriage Registers of St.Peter's, Cradley, 1850-1910; Dudley Library Microfilm 360 and 361

the mean, so the differential between those women marrying coalminers and those marrying other working class men becomes greater. If all women aged under thirty-five at the time of their marriages are included then the mean difference in age of marriage for the period 1850-1910 was 0.9 of a year. Given the greater number of marriages delayed beyond the age of twenty-five by those women marrying working class men other than coalminers, this is not surprising. The differential between the mean age of marriage of the two groups of women formed part of the explanation for the differences in marital fertility and size of family recorded for Lower Gornal in the second half of the nineteenth century. However, this differential in the age of

Chart 6.10

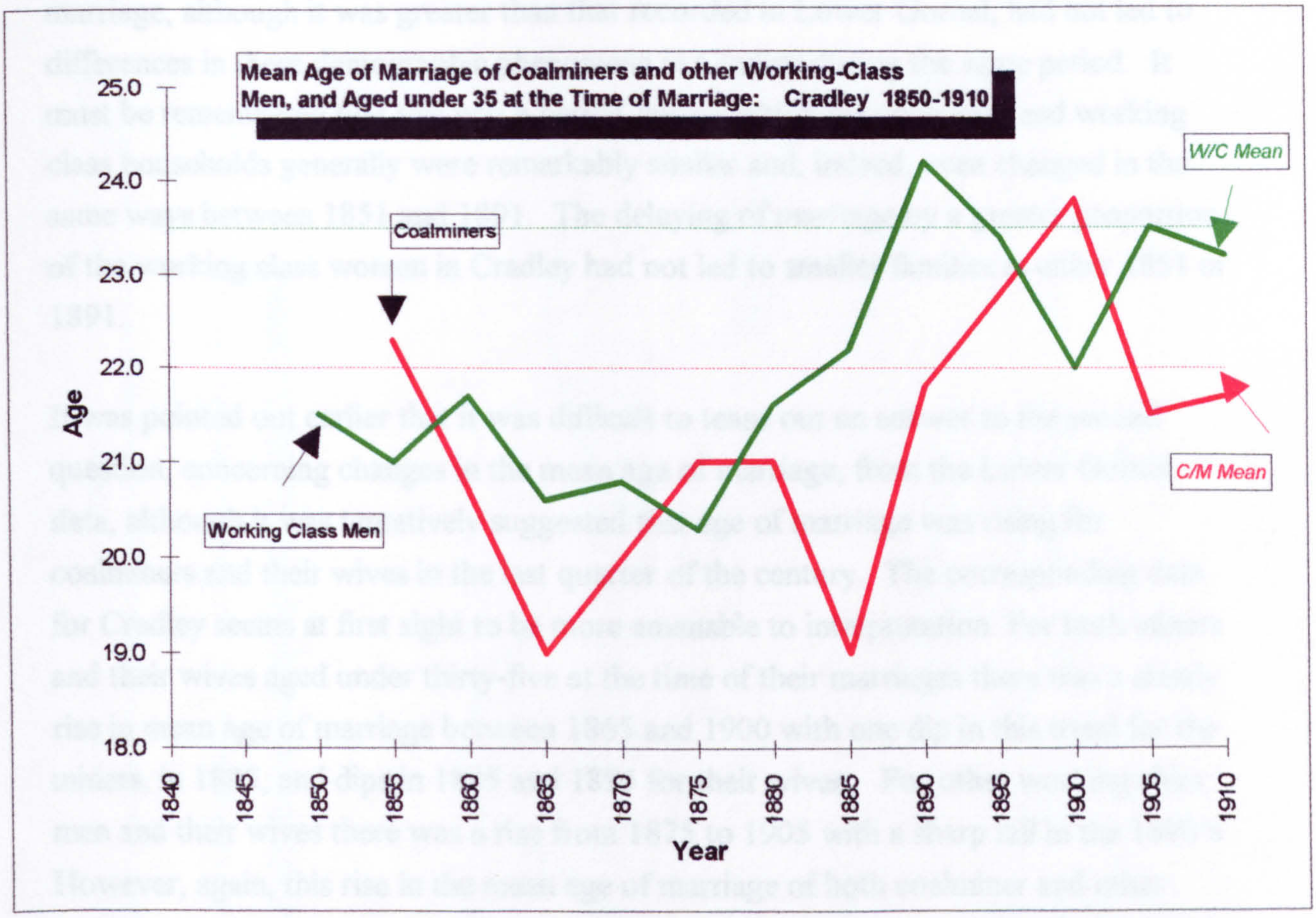
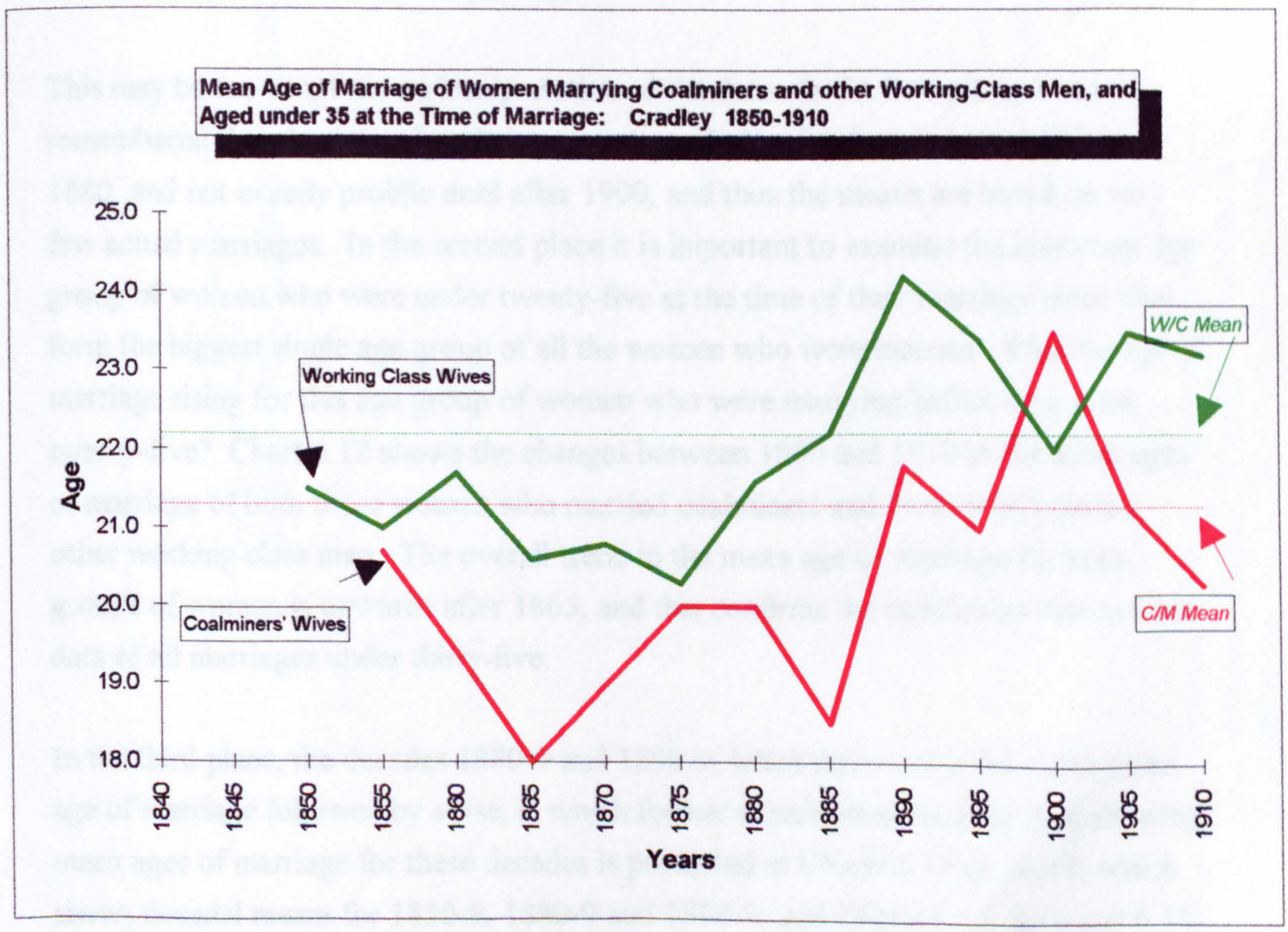


Chart 6.11



Source: Marriage Registers of St.Peter's, Cradley 1850-1910; Dudley Library Microfilms 360 and 361

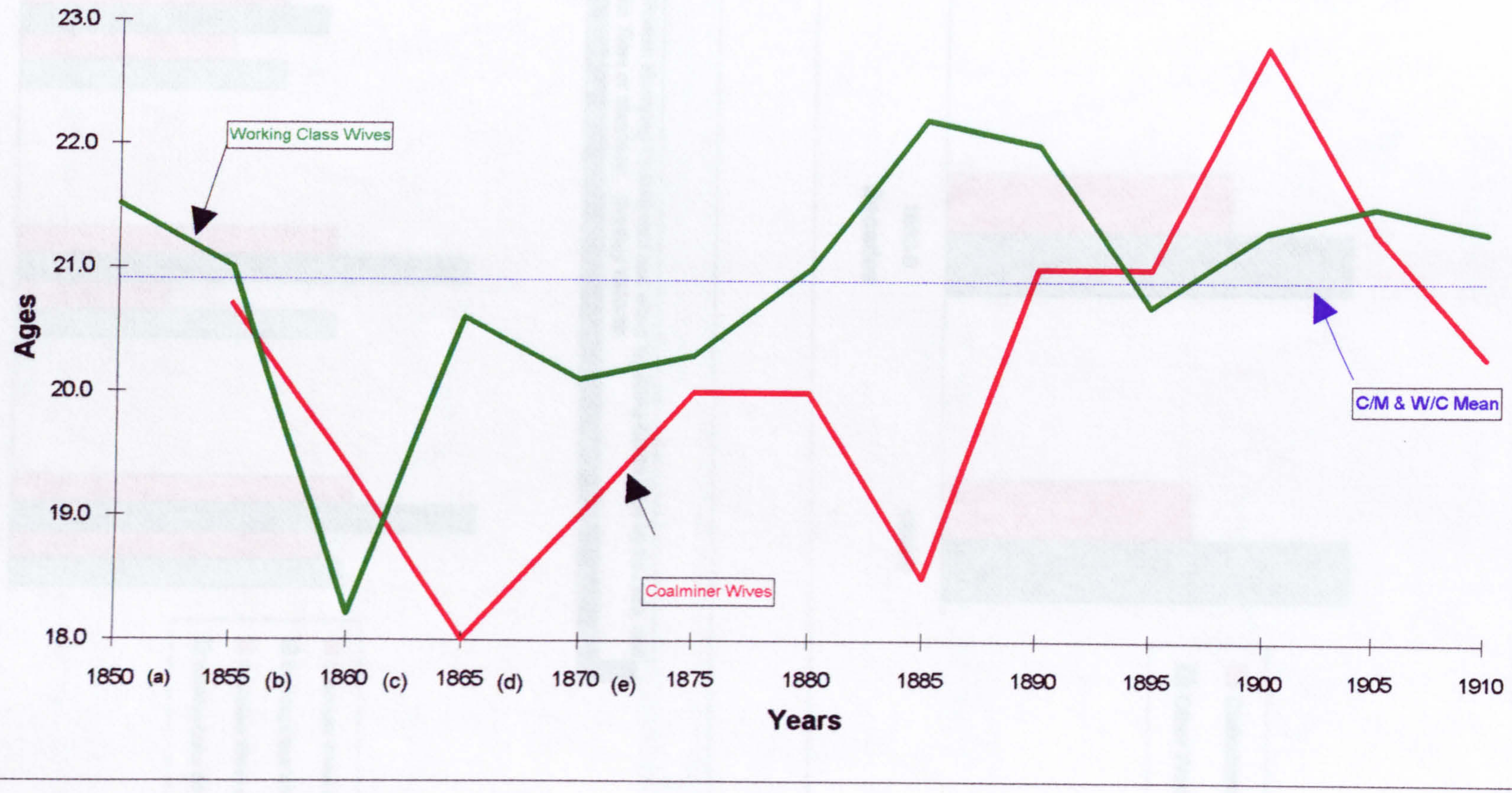
marriage, although it was greater than that recorded in Lower Gornal, had not led to differences in these demographic phenomena in Cradley during the same period. It must be remembered that this was a period during which the coalminer and working class households generally were remarkably similar and, indeed, even changed in the same ways between 1851 and 1891. The delaying of marriage by a greater proportion of the working class women in Cradley had not led to smaller families in either 1851 or 1891.

It was pointed out earlier that it was difficult to tease out an answer to the second question, concerning changes in the mean age of marriage, from the Lower Gornal data, although it was tentatively suggested that age of marriage was rising for coalminers and their wives in the last quarter of the century. The corresponding data for Cradley seems at first sight to be more amenable to interpretation. For both miners and their wives aged under thirty-five at the time of their marriages there was a steady rise in mean age of marriage between 1865 and 1900 with one dip in this trend for the miners, in 1885, and dips in 1885 and 1895 for their wives. For other working class men and their wives there was a rise from 1875 to 1905 with a sharp fall in the 1890's. However, again, this rise in the mean age of marriage of both coalminer and other working-class couples had not led to any decrease in the size of their families, which by 1891 had risen from 4.4 to 4.8 persons.

This may be too simplistic an interpretation of the data. In the first place, it must be remembered that the data of coalminer marriages in Cradley is very sparse before 1880, and not exactly prolific until after 1900, and thus the means are based on very few actual marriages. In the second place it is important to examine the important age group of women who were under twenty-five at the time of their marriage since they form the biggest single age group of all the women who were married. Was the age of marriage rising for this age group of women who were marrying before they were twenty-five? Chart 6.12 shows the changes between 1850 and 1910 in the mean ages of marriage of both those women who married coalminers and those who married other working class men. The overall trend in the mean age of marriage for both groups of women is upwards after 1865, and this confirms the conclusion drawn from data of all marriages under thirty-five.

In the third place, the decades 1880-9 and 1890-9, when there was a fall in the mean age of marriage followed by a rise, is worth further examination, and the data showing mean ages of marriage for these decades is presented in Charts 6.13 and 6.14, which shows decadal means for 1850-9, 1880-9 and 1890-9; and Charts 6.15, 6.16 and 6.17,

Mean Age of Marriage of Women Marrying Coalminers and other Working-Class Men, and Aged under 25 at the Time of Marriage: Cradley 1850-1910



Notes:
(a) In 1850 there were no marriages of coalminers and only 2 of working class women under 25
(b) In 1860 there were no marriages of coalminers to women under 25
(c) In 1865 there was only 1 coalminer marriage to a woman under 25
(d) In 1870 there were no marriages of coalminers to women under 25

Source: Marriage Registers of St.Peter's, Cradley 1850-1910; Dudley Library Microfilms 360 and 361

Chart 6.13

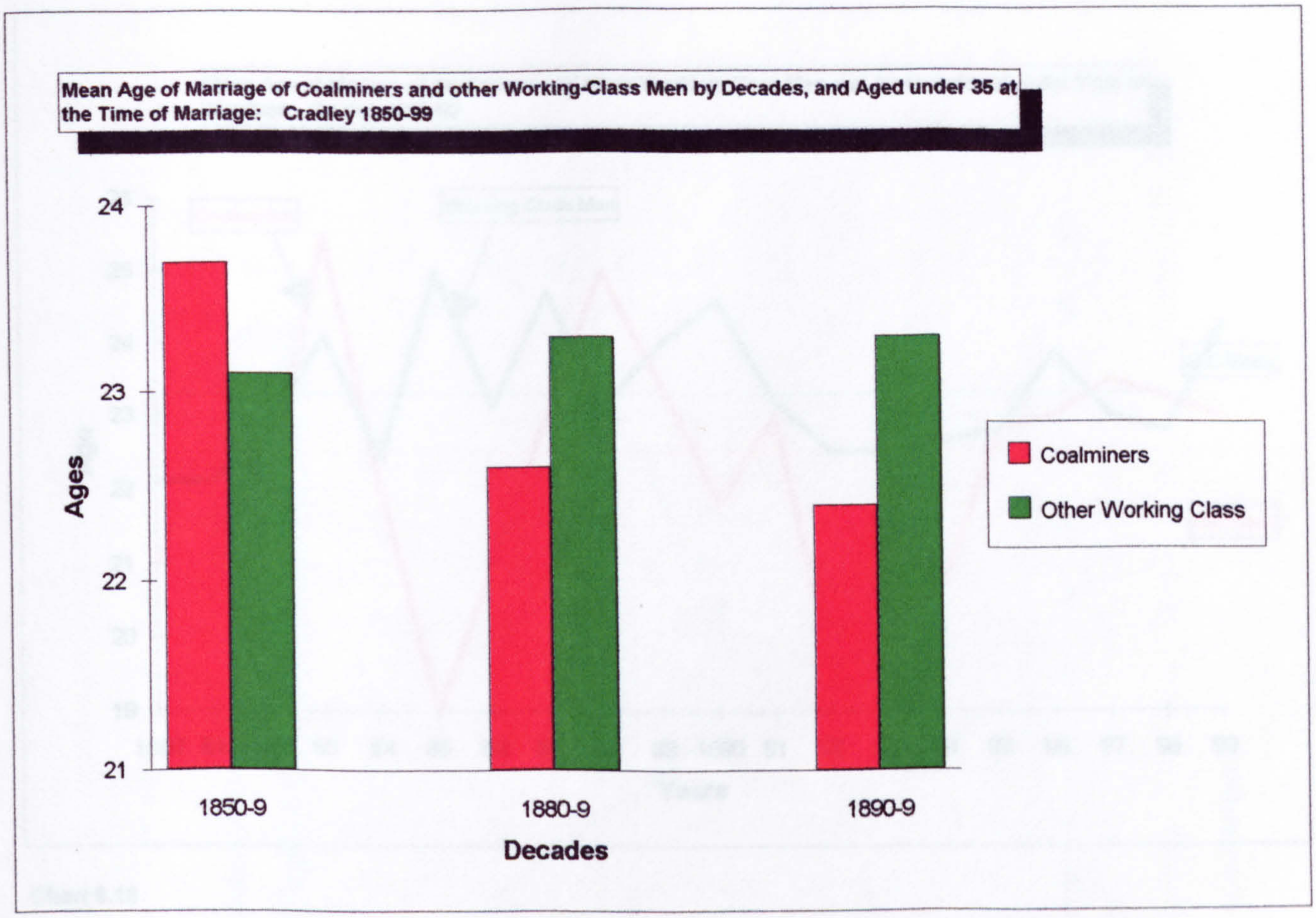
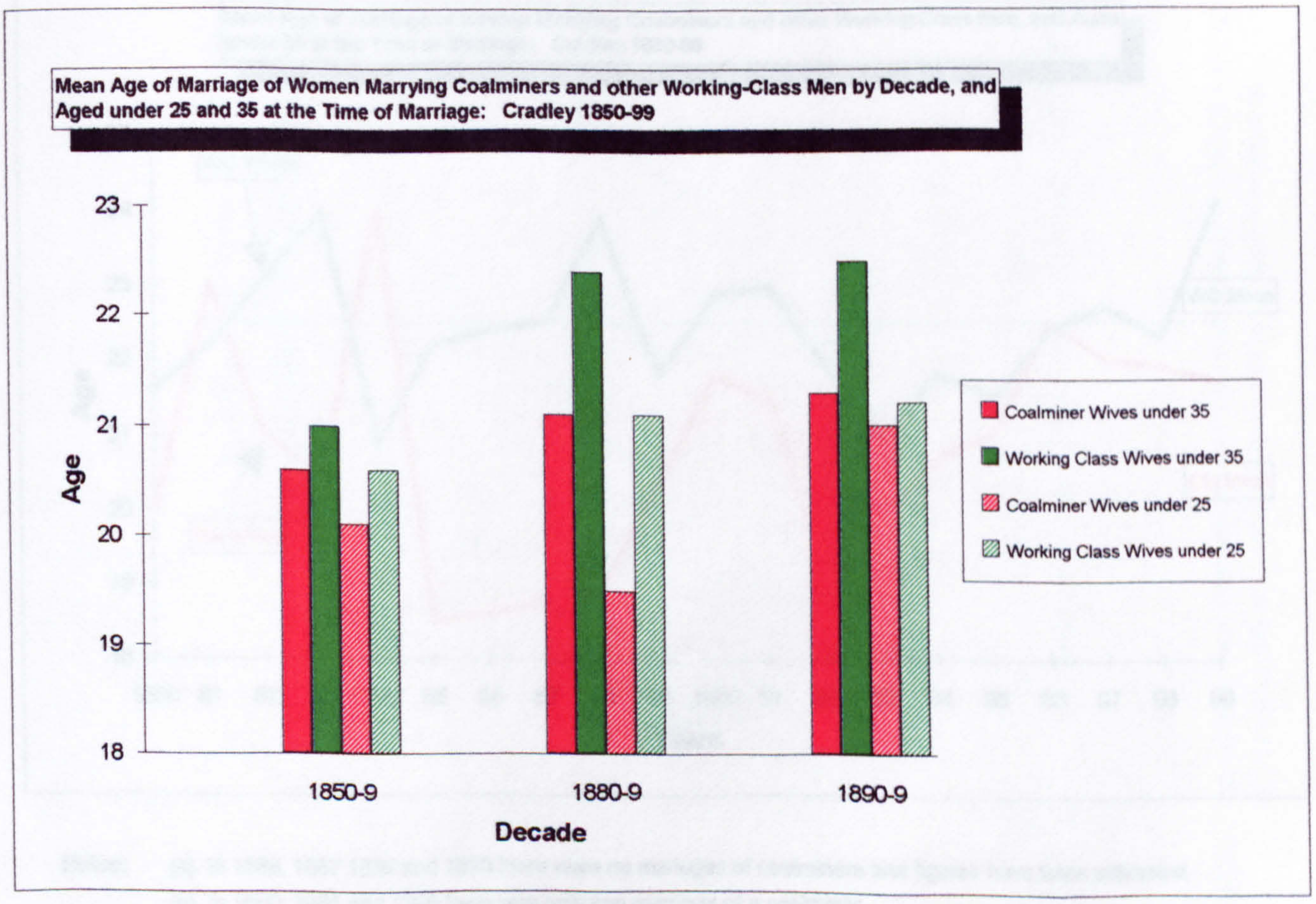


Chart 6.14



Source: Marriage Registers of St.Peter's, Cradley 1850-1910; Dudley Library Microfilms 360 and 361

Chart 6.15

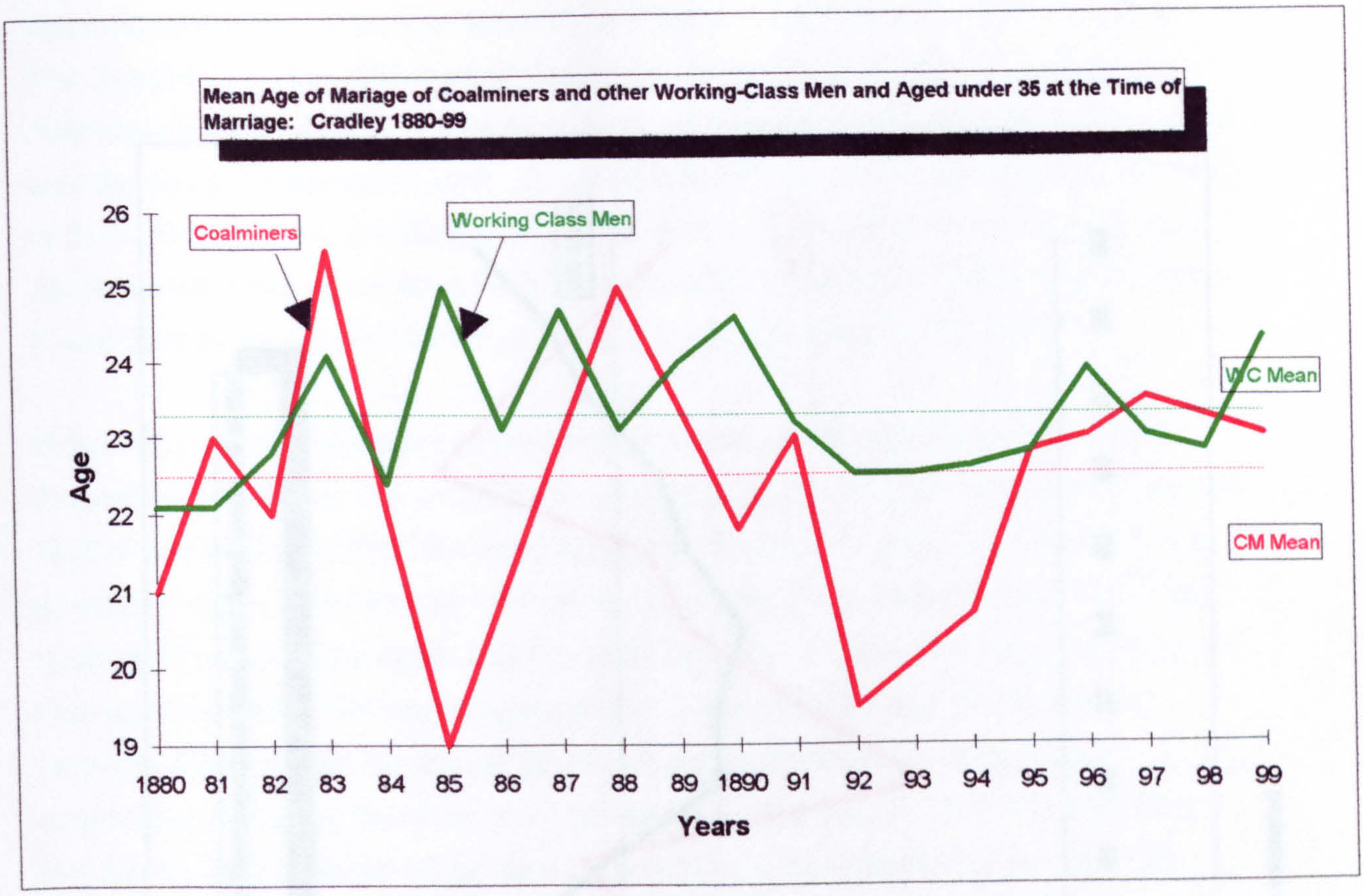
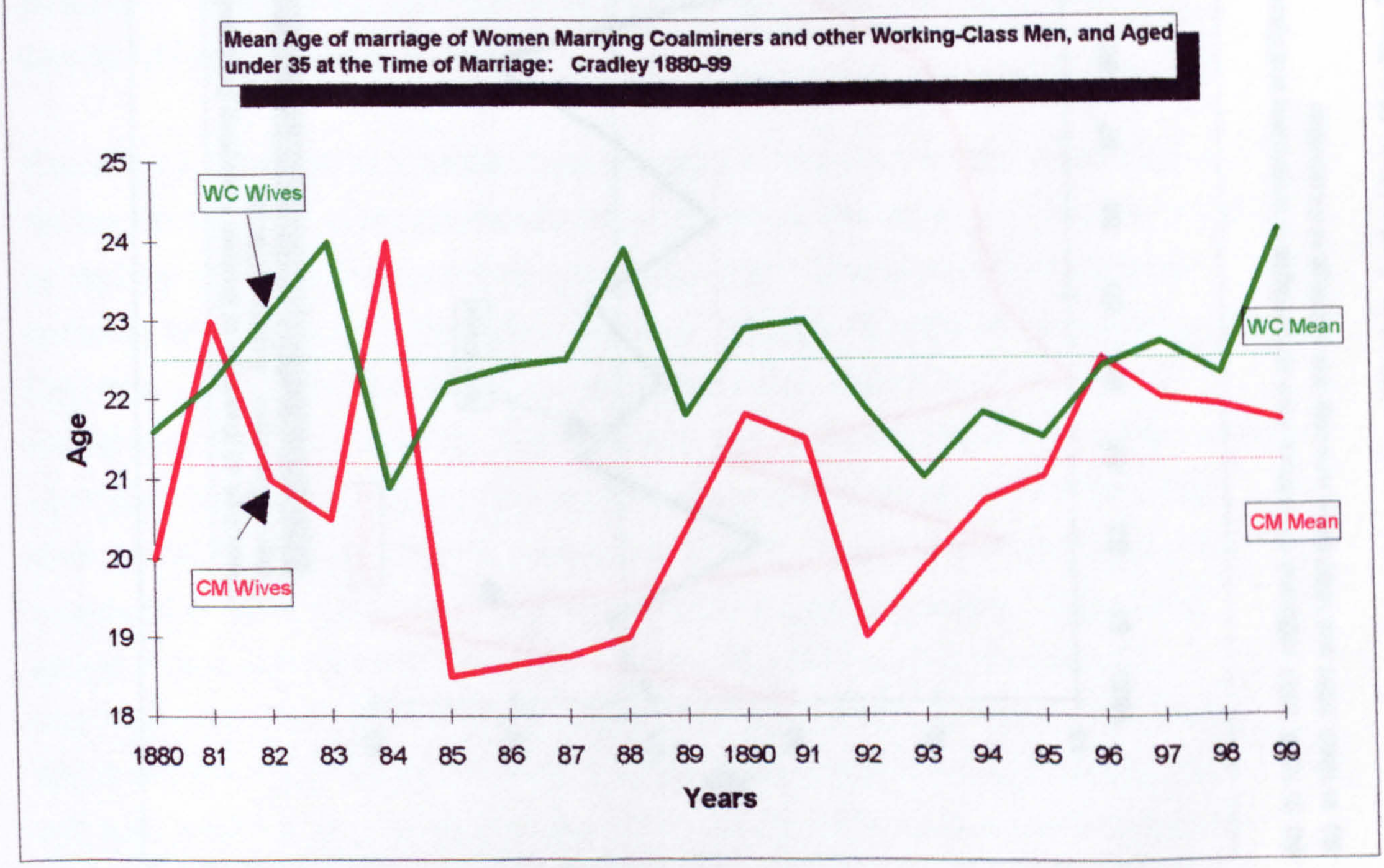


Chart 6.16

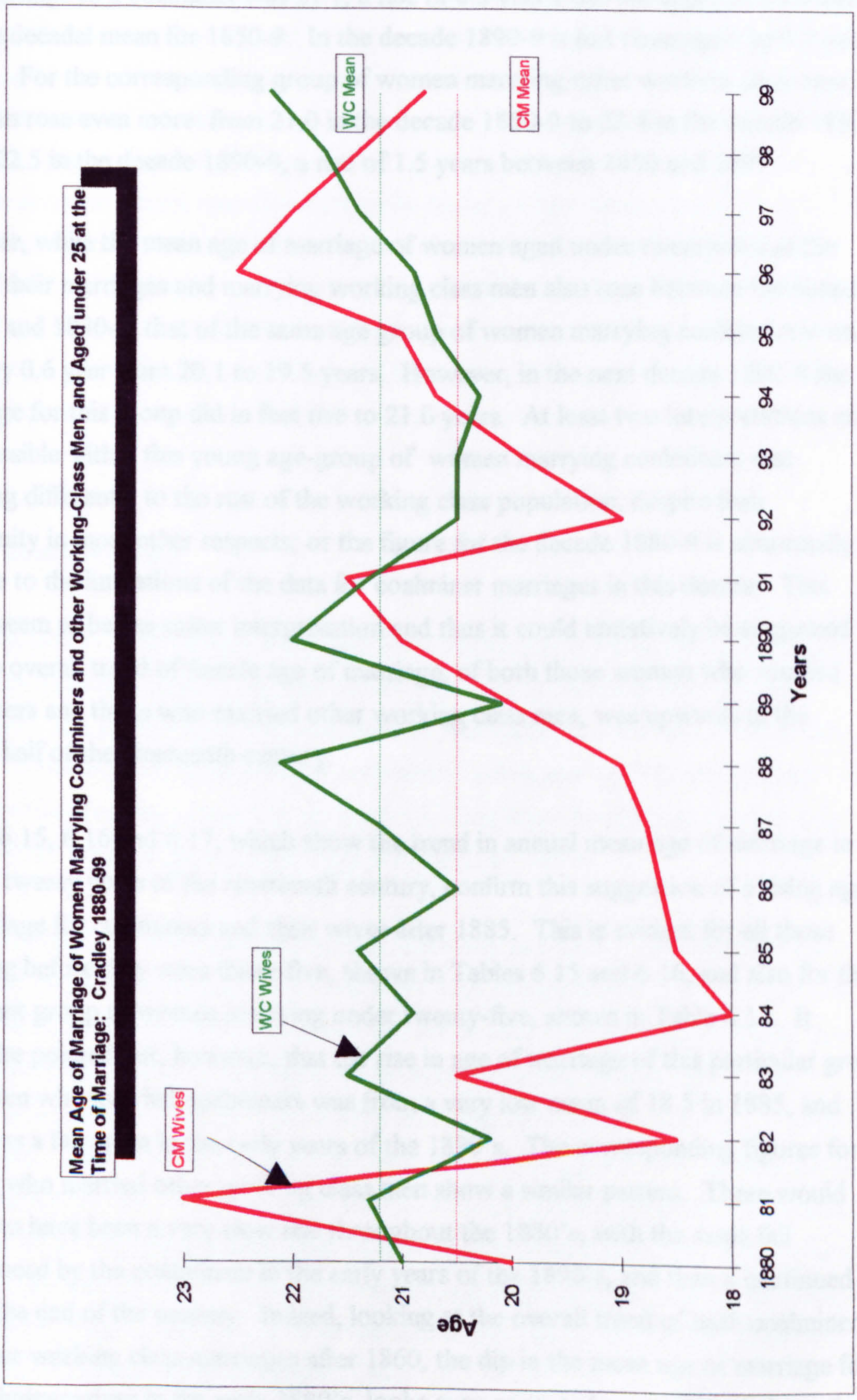


Notes: (a) In 1886, 1887 1889 and 1893 there were no mariages of coalminers and figures have been estimated

(b) In 1880, 1881 and 1898 there was only one marriage of a coalminer

Source: Marriage Registers of St.Peter's, Cradley 1850-1910; Dudley Library Microfilms 360 and 361

Chart 6.17



Notes: (a) In 1886, 1887 1889 and 1893 there were no mariages of coalminers and figures have been estimated
(b) In 1880, 1881 and 1898 there was only one marriage of a coalminer

Source: Marriage Registers of St.Peter's, Cradley 1850-1910; Dudley Library Microfilms 360 and 361

which show the trends in mean ages of marriage annually between 1880 and 1899. The decadal mean for 1880-9 of all those women aged under thirty-five at the time of their marriage to a coalminer was 21.1, a rise of 0.5 year from the figure of 20.6 which was the decadal mean for 1850-9. In the decade 1890-9 it had risen again by 0.2 year to 21.3. For the corresponding group of women marrying other working class men, the mean rose even more: from 21.0 in the decade 1850-9 to 22.4 in the decade 1880-9, and 22.5 in the decade 1890-9, a rise of 1.5 years between 1850 and 1899.

However, while the mean age of marriage of women aged under twenty-five at the time of their marriages and marrying working class men also rose between the decades 1850-9 and 1880-9, that of the same age group of women marrying coalminers went down by 0.6 year from 20.1 to 19.5 years. However, in the next decade 1890-9 the mean age for this group did in fact rise to 21.0 years. At least two interpretations are thus possible: either this young age-group of women marrying coalminers was behaving differently to the rest of the working class population, despite their conformity in most other respects; or the figure for the decade 1880-9 is abnormally low due to the limitations of the data for coalminer marriages in this decade. This would seem to be the safest interpretation and thus it could tentatively be suggested that the overall trend of female age of marriage, of both those women who married coalminers and those who married other working class men, was upwards in the second half of the nineteenth century.

Charts 6.15, 6.16 and 6.17, which show the trend in annual mean age of marriage in the last twenty years of the nineteenth century, confirm this suggestion of a rising age of marriage for coalminers and their wives after 1885. This is evident for all those marrying before they were thirty-five, shown in Tables 6.15 and 6.16, and also for the important group of women marrying under twenty-five, shown in Table 6.17. It should be pointed out, however, that the rise in age of marriage of this particular group of women who married coalminers was from a very low mean of 18.5 in 1885, and there was a fall again in the early years of the 1890's. The corresponding figures for women who married other working class men show a similar pattern. There would appear to have been a very slow rise throughout the 1880's, with the same fall experienced by the coalminers in the early years of the 1890's, and then a continued rise to the end of the century. Indeed, looking at the overall trend of both coalminer and other working class marriages after 1860, the dip in the mean age of marriage for the coalminer wives in the early 1880's, looks even more to be a statistical aberration arising from insufficient data, rather than a real change in trend.

Thus, the socio-economic model which maintains a causal link between age of marriage and marital fertility and consequent family size needs amendment in the light of this data. A rising age of marriage should, all other factors remaining the same, lead to a fall in marital fertility and family size, and vice versa. In reality, of the two groups of households examined in Lower Gornal and Cradley in the second half of the nineteenth century, only the working class generally in Lower Gornal did, in fact, display the characteristics of falling marital fertility and family size consistent with an increase in age of female marriage during the period. The coalminer families of Lower Gornal increased in size, and so too did both the coalminer and other working class families of Cradley, despite a rising mean age of female marriage. This does of course beg the question of whether attention should be focused on the reasons why the working class families of Lower Gornal did not follow the same trend of increasing their family size in the second half of the nineteenth century.

(e) Birth Frequency

If the increase in family size in coalminer households cannot be attributed to a fall in the age of marriage, then an explanation for the increase will have to be sought elsewhere. Is it possible that apparent fertility was higher in coalminer families than the rest of the working class because coalminers' wives produced more children during their reproductive period because the period of time between the birth of each child was shorter? The evidence is presented in Table 6.10 below.

It is immediately obvious that the increase in fertility and family size evident in the coalminer population between 1851 and 1891, and summarised in Table 4.16 above, cannot be attributed to a fall in the interval between the birth of children which would have allowed the wives of coalminers to have more children within their overall reproductive capacity: the interval in both 1851 and 1891 was constant at 2.6 years for the sample. The difference between the birth intervals of the wives of coalminers and those married to other working class men in 1851, 2.6 years compared to 2.8 years, does show again a difference between coalminer families and those of other working class occupational groups. This difference had fallen to only 0.1 year by 1891 and this is hardly sufficient to explain the differences in family size between them which had risen from 0.5 person to 1.0 person by 1891.

It is possible that the overall mean presented in Table 6.10 is hiding birth intervals

Table 6.10 Frequency of Births to Wives Aged 15-49: Lower Gornal 1851

		Mean number of years between 1st and 2nd child	Mean number of years between 2nd and 3rd child	Mean number of years between 3rd and 4th child	Mean number of years between 4th and 5th child	Mean number of years between 5th and 6th child	Mean number of years between 6th and 7th child	Mean number of years between 7th and 8th child	Mean number of years between 8th and 9th child	Mean number of years between 9th and 10th child	Mean All Births
Coalminer Families (All births) (1)	1851	3.1	2.7	2.9	2.8	2.5	2.0	3.0	2.5	2.0	2.9
	1891	3.0	2.9	2.8	2.9	2.8	2.9	2.5	2.7	3.0	2.9
Coalminer Families (Adjusted Sample) (2)	1851	2.5	2.4	2.6	2.7	2.5	2.0	2.0	2.5	2.0	2.6
	1891	2.5	2.5	2.6	2.7	2.8	2.7	2.5	2.7	3.0	2.6
Working Class Families (All births) (1)	1851	3.5	3.2	3.0	3.0	3.5	2.2	3.0	1.0		3.3
	1891	3.1	2.8	3.5	3.2	2.8	2.0	3.3	1.5		3.1
Working Class Families (Adjusted Sample) (2)	1851	2.7	2.7	2.8	2.8	2.9	2.2	3.0	1.0		2.8
	1891	2.7	2.6	2.9	2.9	2.8	2.0	3.3	1.5		2.7

Notes: (1)These figures were calculated from all births to wives aged 15-49

(2)These figures are adjusted by eliminating those birth intervals which seem unlikely, ie. over 5 years, since it is tentatively assumed that the incidence of gaps longer than 5 years is a result of intervening children having died or of wives having had a break in the pattern of childbearing through the loss of original partners which has then been resumed by remarriage

Sources: Census Enumerators' Books 1851; Registration District Dudley; PRO Microfilm No. HO 1072030

Census Enumerators' Books 1891; Registrar's District Dudley; PRO Microfiche 12/2291 and 12/2292

specific to particular age groups. Table 6.11 below shows the birth intervals of the last two children for women aged 25-29, 35-39 and 45-49. It also shows the age of the last child born to the 45-49 age group and the assumption is made that this would be their last child to be born, and that their families were complete. Obviously, there would be women in this age group who were pregnant at the time of the Census, and who therefore had not completed their families; there would also be women in this age group whose reproductive cycle was not finished and who therefore had not completed their families. However, it is assumed that these two categories of women in the 45-49 age group were very small and their individual statistics will not, therefore, cause a distortion of the evidence. Using the age of the last child to indicate the age at which women stopped having children yields some interesting phenomena about both the wives of coalminers and the working class in general.

If the pattern of births to the wives of coalminers is examined first it is clear that in 1851 there was little difference between the first two age groups examined in the mean birth interval of the last child, and both were close to the overall mean birth interval for all births of 2.6 years, shown in Table 6.10. The older age group of wives aged 45-9 did, however, have a longer birth interval of 3.2 years between their last two children. In 1891, however, further differences had emerged between the age groups. In the first place, the mean birth interval of the last two children born to wives aged 25-9 has fallen by 0.5 year compared to 1851 and thus it would seem that the young coalminer wives in 1891 were having their children at closer intervals than in 1851. In the second place, while in the age group 35-9 there had been little change, the birth interval of the last two children in the older 45-9 age group had fallen to 2.9 years compared to 3.2 years in 1851. The shorter mean interval between the births of their last children, to both the wives aged 25-9 and those aged 45-9 in 1891, helps to explain the relatively higher apparent fertility and family size demonstrated earlier in this chapter and in the last chapter. The evidence points, somewhat tentatively, to the conclusion that the wives of coalminers were having their babies at shorter intervals in 1891. The overall mean birth interval was hiding this phenomenon.

Amongst the working-class wives a somewhat different pattern of birth intervals is evident. In 1851 the mean birth interval of the last two children born to wives in all three of the age groups sampled is slightly higher than that of the wives of coalminers, and this accords with their relatively lower fertility and smaller family size demonstrated earlier in the Chapter. As simple as the conclusion would seem, working-class wives had bigger gaps between the birth of their children than did the

Table 6.11 Age-Specific Mean Birth Intervals: Lower Gornal 1851 and 1891

	Mean birth interval of the last two children (a)			Mean age of last child born	
	Wives Aged 25-9	Wives Aged 35-9	Wives Aged 45-9	Wives Aged 45-9 (b)	Wives Aged 45-9 (c)
1851					
Coalminer Families	2.8	2.6	3.2	6.8	2.4
Working-Class Families	3.0	3.0	3.4	7.0	2.4
1891					
Coalminer Families	2.3	2.7	2.9	7.4	2.8
Working-Class Families	2.4	2.6	3.1	6.9	3.4

Notes: (a) These figures are adjusted by eliminating those birth intervals which seem unlikely, ie. over 5 years, since it is tentatively assumed that the incidence of gaps longer than 5 years is a result of intervening children having died or of wives having had a break in the pattern of childbearing through the loss of original partners which has then been resumed by remarriage
(b) These figures are calculated from the whole samples of wives aged 45-9, irrespective of the ages of the children
(c) These figures are adjusted in the same way as in (a)

Sources: Census Enumerators' Books 1851; Registration District Dudley; PRO Microfilm No. HO 1072030
Census Enumerators' Books 1891; Registrar's District Dudley; PRO Microfiche 12/2291 and 12/2292

wives of coalminers, and thus they had fewer children and smaller families. By 1891, however, this had changed since the mean birth interval of the last two children has fallen for all three age groups, and most dramatically for the 25-9 age group. Even amongst the oldest age group of 45-9 year old wives there had been a small fall in birth interval between 1851 and 1891. Thus, working-class wives in general in 1891 were displaying the pattern of birth intervals already seen in the coalminer families, and yet this had not yet led to higher fertility and family size by 1891. It may be that there is some kind of lag factor operating here and it would be assumed that, if the shorter birth interval evident among the 25-9 age group continued, this would result in a rise in family size among the working class families in general.

The figures for the mean age of the last child born to wives in the age group of 45 to 49 years olds also reveal what might be some interesting shifts in behaviour between 1851 and 1891. In 1851 the sample of women aged 45-9, and who can be regarded as having finished their reproductive cycle, was very small: 18 women in the case of

miners' wives and 19 other working class women. Among both samples there was a large number who were recorded as having a last child more than five years old: 8 in the case of the miners' wives and 12 in the case of the other wives. In both samples there were 5 wives having last children older than ten, and there were examples of last children as old as seventeen and twenty. It is difficult to decide how to analyse such evidence. Are these anomalies the result of poor evidence from a small sample or based on poor recording and lack of information in 1851; or are they the result of the vagaries of working-class life in the nineteenth century, one feature of which was high infant mortality which meant that subsequent children born to these women had died; or were the "missing" children simply not resident when the Census was made? Or had many women among both the coalminer and working class families in general found ways of limiting their families, or at least not conceiving once they considered their families to be complete, and thus showing in Table 6.11 above mean ages for their last children of 6.8 and 7.0 respectively? In this respect in 1851 both the wives of coalminers and those married to other working class men showed a similar pattern of behaviour, reinforced by the adjusted figure of 2.4 years for the mean age of the last child of both groups of women.

By 1891 the anomalies of last children older than five are still present with 23 out of the coalminer sample of 41 families, and 10 out of the working class sample of 17, having such children. While the unadjusted mean age of the last child in coalminer families has risen to 7.4 years, in the working class families there had been little change with a slight fall to 6.9 years from the earlier figure of 7.0 years. Even when last children aged more than five years are removed from the sample and subsequent analysis, by 1891the mean age of the last child had risen to 2.8 years in coalminer families and 3.4 years in working class families in general. This is shown in the last column of Table 6.11 above.

By 1891 a small but perhaps significant difference has emerged between the wives of coalminers and other working-class women. If it is assumed that the wives in the samples had completed their families by 1851 and 1891 respectively, then the age of the last recorded child will reveal the age at which the wives stopped conceiving. For the adjusted sample of both coalminer wives and the other working class wives the mean age of the 45-9 age group was 46.0 years. Subtracting the mean age of the last born child for both these samples, 2.4 years in both cases, gives a mean age at last birth of 43.6 years for both groups. In 1891 a similar calculation gives a mean age at last birth of 43.3 years for the coalminer wives, and 42.3 for the other working-class wives. The coalminer wives were completing their families only 0.3 of a year earlier in

1891 compared to 1851, whereas the working class wives had completed their families 1.3 years earlier. If this analysis is tenable, then it again helps to explain partly the differences in family size in coalminer households compared to working-class households in general discussed earlier in the chapter. It is also significant that the coalminer wives had reduced the age at last birth, or the age at which they had completed their families, by a much smaller amount than the other working-class wives. The time lag, which has been evident in other features of coalminer household demography in the second half of the nineteenth century, is again present again here in this examination of family completion ages. Finding the reasons why nineteenth century working-class wives in general should have completed their families earlier, or, conversely, why coalminer wives continued having children longer than other wives, is virtually impossible. In the first place, of course, the assumption has to be made that working class wives had the means to limit their families once they considered them to be complete. Banks maintains that the practice of family limitation was *"endemic to all classes"*, and that the most widely used form of contraception was 'coitus interruptus', with abortion playing a significant role in limiting families. (34) If this is accepted, then the question has to be asked whether they were consciously choosing to stop having children at a certain point in their life cycle, or whether the figures produced above simply reflect what were the biological and physiological realities of working class women's reproductive cycles in the second half of the nineteenth century, and over which they had almost no control. Banks maintains that the limitation of family size did not result from the economic rationality of wives, otherwise they would surely have tried to limit their families to a level at which they could be maintained. (35)

Those writers who commented on these aspects of working class life in the late nineteenth century have largely fallen into two distinct camps; those who see working class women as, more-or-less, helpless victims and those who maintain that this image now needs revising, especially for the end of the century. Do we have to accept completely the gloomy picture of working-class sexuality painted by Helen Bosanquet in 1899, in which a husband was *"callous in sex, as often as not forcing a trial of unwanted pregnancies upon his unwilling mate"*? (36) Peter Stearns sees no reason to disagree with this image of working class women having very limited expectations beyond the immediate present:

> *"a bit more money and security, a bit less work to do, and perhaps the bliss of having fewer children"* . (37)

Stearns maintains that miners' wives in particular fitted this image in the nineteenth century displaying traditional attitudes of resignation which kept their families large even well into the twentieth century, a view supported by Ellen Ross's investigation of the working class women of London. (38) Such views have not been contradicted by those historians who have worked with oral evidence for the years 1890-1930 which largely corroborates the image of working class women as victims in most, if not all, aspects of their lives. (39) This evidence also reveals that women with few children were regarded as being odd or practising abortion, and there was a fatalistic attitude towards conception, pregnancy and birth coupled with widespread ignorance about the mechanics of contraception. Moreover, while family size for many working-class women did fall in the late nineteenth century, the oral evidence gives very few clues about how or why this happened, other than vague hints about economic or medical reasons for limiting family size. (40)

This view is, however, being challenged by those historians who, though accepting that the role of the nineteeth century working class wife and mother was a battle for survival never really won, argue that, by the end of the century, the pattern was changing, not least because of improvements in standard of living after 1870. (41) J.Weeks maintains that while there was general distrust among the working class of the middle-class enthusiasm for birth control, the methods were not alien to them, and from the end of the nineteenth century there is evidence of a planned decline of working-class family size. (42) He does, however, specifically exclude coalminers from this process and the 1911 Census shows them maintaining large families of 3.6 children, and they remained the only large occupational group whose families averaged over three children. (43) The data on family size among the coalminers of Lower Gornal in 1891 produced in this Chapter, showing them lagging behind the rest of the working class population, would certainly seem to accord with the views of Weeks. Such data, whether representing the national picture or a small community like Lower Gornal does not, of course, say anything about the reasons why coalminer families remained large.

(f) Levels of female employment

The availability of employment for females is important in any discussion of the factors which affected levels of nuptiality, age of marriage, and levels of fertility within marriage. The opportunities available to women for paid employment might have

affected both their willingness to marry and the point at which married couples started their families, qualified always by the proviso that control over conception was limited for working class women in the nineteenth century. Here the Census will be used to examine levels of participation in employment by coalminers' wives: by comparison with other working class wives generally; by comparison with them in different communities; and by comparison over time between 1851 and 1891.

There are problems for the historian in using the Census to reconstruct levels of female participation in paid employment. In the nineteenth century women tended to be regarded as dependants, whatever their productive functions. (44) The industrialisation of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century led to the creation of a new socio-economic model. This consisted of a dual economy comprising a family economy dominated by females with a capitalist market economy grafted on to it, dominated by men. (45) This model is, of course, too simple to explain the economic role of women, since many worked in both economies as housewives in the former and as paid employees in the latter.

The problem for the historian lies in determining the levels of consistency in the way in which work was recorded by the Census Enumerators. In the Census of 1851 and those subsequent, an attempt was made to separate these two female roles, and householders were instructed that regular work away from home or at home, other than purely domestic duties, was to be recorded as occupation. (46) In effect, this instruction restricted the Census record of female occupation to that which was done in the market economy. Since it was participation in such work which may have affected attitudes towards marriage and procreation, the Census record would thus seem to provide the historian with a useful source of evidence. However, no guidance was given about the recording of part-time, casual or seasonal employment and it is difficult to judge the extent to which such work was classified by the Enumerators as *'occupation'*. (47) It is impossible to estimate the amount of under-recording of women's work which would have ensued from this lack of clear guidance concerning such work. Jane Lewis maintains that as many as twice the number of women worked at some point in their lives as is shown by the Census. (48) The problem is made worse for the historian using data compiled for Lower Gornal due to the amount of domestic work in the nail industry which was the principal employer of female labour. Were all those women recorded as *'nailers'* in the Census actually working away from home? How was *'working away from home'* interpreted here in an industry which was conducted both in small domestic nailshops situated at the rear of the workers' houses,

and also in larger separate nailshops. No distinction is made in the Census between these different types of employment.

Table 6.12 and 6.13 attempt to reconstruct the pattern of employment for single, married and widowed women in Lower Gornal in 1851 and 1891. It is very difficult to compare these figures with those produced by other historians since they use different sample age groups, different sample areas, and are calculated for different points in time in the nineteenth century. The age of ten has been used in this Thesis as the starting point for calculation of participation rates since this allowed the inclusion of all those females recorded as having employment in 1891 and all but five females aged under ten who were recorded as employed in the 1851 Census.

The proportion of working-class females in Lower Gornal who were employed in 1851, 39.7%, is higher than the estimate of between 25% and 30% of females employed nationally in 1851, made by Louise Tilly and Joan Scott. (49) It is also higher than the figure of 31.6% which can be extrapolated from the participation rate in employment calculated by Jane Lewis from the 1901 Census. (50) Comparison of those females over fifteen who were employed in Lower Gornal in 1851 and 1891 with Dov Friedlander's figures for 1871 is also interesting. He calculated a figure of 30.1% of women aged over fifteen working in the coal mining county of Monmouthshire in 1871, while his figure for England and Wales as a whole is 41.1%. If the figures for only those females aged over fifteen are extrapolated from Tables 6.12 and 6.13, then in working class households in Lower Gornal some 42.9% of females in 1851, and 36.8% of females in 1891 were in fact employed. Both of these figures show a female participation rate in employment higher than Friedlander's figures for the coalmining area he examined, and closer to the national figure in 1871. However, it must be remembered that the figures for Lower Gornal working-class women do not include any females from coalminer households, who, as Tables 6.12 and 6.13 clearly show, had much lower participation rates, and thus these figures for working class females would need to be deflated somewhat to reflect a more realistic picture of female employment in the second half of the nineteenth century. Thus the female participation rates in employment in Lower Gornal in the second half of the nineteenth century would seem to accord with those produced by Friedlander for the coalmining county of Monmouthshire in 1871.

Michael Anderson's study of Preston in 1851 produced a figure of 26% of married women working, and this accords to some extent with the figure of 31.3% of the married working-class females in Lower Gornal shown in Table 6.12 below. The

Table 6.12 Women in Employment by Age, Marital Status and Household: Lower Gornal 1851

	10–14			15–19			20–24			25–29			30–39			40–49			50–59			60+			Totals		
	N	Emp	%	N	Emp	%	N	Emp	%	N	Emp	%	N	Emp	%	N	Emp	%	N	Emp	%	N	Emp	%	N	Emp	%
Coalminer Households																											
Single	69	13	*18.8*	33	15	*45.5*	20	12	*60.0*	4	0	*0.0*	5	4	*80.0*	0	0		0	0		0	0		131	44	*33.6*
Married	0	0		2	0	*0.0*	36	8	*22.2*	58	11	*19.0*	69	15	*21.7*	38	2	*5.3*	17	1	*5.9*	7	0	*0.0*	227	37	*16.3*
Widowed	0	0		0	0		0	0		0	0		0	0		1	1	*100.0*	1	1	*100.0*	1	1	*100.0*	3	3	*100.0*
Total	**69**	**13**	*18.8*	**35**	**15**	*42.9*	**56**	**20**	*35.7*	**62**	**11**	*17.7*	**74**	**19**	*25.7*	**39**	**3**	*7.7*	**18**	**2**	*11.1*	**8**	**1**	*12.5*	**361**	**84**	*23.3*
Working-Class Households																											
Single	114	33	*28.9*	62	40	*64.5*	20	13	*65.0*	8	6	*75.0*	9	7	*77.8*	3	3	*100.0*	3	2	*66.7*	3	1	*33.3*	222	105	*47.3*
Married	0	0		2	1	*50.0*	39	16	*41.0*	26	12	*46.2*	77	26	*33.8*	44	10	*22.7*	24	2	*8.3*	21	6	*28.6*	233	73	*31.3*
Widowed	0	0		0			0	0		3	1	*33.3*	6	4	*66.7*	10	7	*70.0*	4	2	*50.0*	13	3	*23.1*	36	17	*47.2*
Total	**114**	**33**	*28.9*	**64**	**41**	*64.1*	**59**	**29**	*49.2*	**37**	**19**	*51.4*	**92**	**37**	*40.2*	**57**	**20**	*35.1*	**31**	**6**	*19.4*	**37**	**10**	*27.0*	**491**	**195**	*39.7*

Notes: N= total number of females in category
Emp= total number of females employed in category

Source: Census Enumerators' Books 1851; Registrar's District Dudley; PRO Microfilm No HO 1072030

Table 6.13 Women in Employment by Age, Marital Status and Household: Lower Gornal 1891

	10–14			15–19			20–24			25–29			30–39			40–49			50–59			60+			Totals		
	N	Emp	%	N	Emp	%	N	Emp	%	N	Emp	%	N	Emp	%	N	Emp	%	N	Emp	%	N	Emp	%	N	Emp	%
Coalminer Households																											
Single	180	26	*14.4*	126	75	*59.5*	46	31	*67.4*	11	8	*72.7*	6	4	*66.7*				3	0	*0.0*	4	1		376	145	*38.6*
Married				6	2	*33.3*	62	12	*19.4*	80	14	*17.5*	137	19	*13.9*	108	7	*6.5*	63	1	*1.6*	22	1	*4.5*	478	56	*11.7*
Widowed				1	0	*0.0*	1	0	*0.0*	1	0	*0.0*				1	0	*0.0*	7	2	*28.6*	22	0	*0.0*	33	2	*6.1*
Total	**180**	**26**	*14.4*	**133**	**77**	*57.9*	**109**	**43**	*39.4*	**92**	**22**	*23.9*	**143**	**23**	*16.1*	**109**	**7**	*6.4*	**73**	**3**	*4.1*	**48**	**2**	*4.2*	**887**	**203**	*22.9*
Working-Class Households																											
Single	62	7	*11.3*	54	38	*70.4*	22	17	*77.3*	6	5	*83.3*	8	7	*87.5*	5	3	*60.0*	2	0	*0.0*	1	0	*0.0*	160	77	*48.1*
Married				1	0	*0.0*	17	8	*47.1*	38	8	*21.1*	51	11	*21.6*	40	4	*10.0*	31	0	*0.0*	21	2	*9.5*	199	33	*16.6*
Widowed							0	1					3	3	*100.0*	5	5	*100.0*	7	3	*42.9*	18	6	*33.3*	33	18	*54.5*
Total	**62**	**7**	*11.3*	**55**	**38**	*69.1*	**39**	**26**	*66.7*	**44**	**13**	*29.5*	**62**	**21**	*33.9*	**50**	**12**	*24.0*	**40**	**3**	*7.5*	**40**	**8**	*20.0*	**392**	**128**	*32.7*

Notes: N= total number of females in category
Emp= total number of females employed in category

Source: Census Enumerators' Books 1891; Registrar's District Dudley; PRO Microfiche 12/2291 and 12/2292

massive fall in the proportion of married working class women shown to be employed in Lower Gornal in 1891, only 16.6% of married women in total, would also seem to accord with the figures of 13% and 14% found by Peter Stearns and Elizabeth Roberts in their studies of working wives and widows in 1901. (51) Although not quantified exactly, Alan Campbell also found that few coalminer wives participated in paid employment in Lanarkshire in the nineteenth century. (52) The employment data for Lower Gornal in the second half of the nineteenth century would seem again, therefore, to be broadly in line with similar data both for the country as a whole, and for those areas which have been examined in detail.

However, comparison with data from other areas of the West Midlands, where coalmining was the predominant industry, shows that Lower Gornal may not have been like other mining settlements. Ruth Crofts found that 14.4% of the women in Madeley were employed in 1881; Edward Billington found that 12.0% were employed in Silverdale between 1841 and 1881; and Mary Mills found that in Cannock and Chasetown only 2.6% and 6.3% of women were employed respectively in 1881. (53) These figures are all much lower than those for Lower Gornal in 1851 and 1891, and the four settlements conform more closely to the stereotype of a *'frontier-like'* mining settlement, with a large imbalance in the sex-ratio in favour of young men, and in which female employment was virtually non-existent. This stereotype does not really fit the socio-economic profile of Lower Gornal in the second half of the nineteeenth century, as has been pointed out so many times in this Thesis.

Thus for the working class generally it would seem that in Lower Gornal in 1851 there was a level of female participation in employment at least as high as that found in some other parts of the country, and found nationally. There is no reason to suppose that women in Lower Gornal in the mid-nineteenth century found it difficult to find employment, or at least no more difficult than women in many places. At face value, the female employment data does not provide evidential support for the argument that women were marrying earlier, and therefore increasing their marital fertility, because there were few opportunities for work; and, indeed, the ready availability of paid work would seem to lend itself to the counter argument that women were more likely to delay marriage because of the relatively ready opportunities for earning a wage. However, the interpretation of this data is fraught with difficulties since it would seem to hinge around the question of whether there were enough opportunities for females to participate in paid employment which might then have created a sufficient disincentive to marriage and procreation.

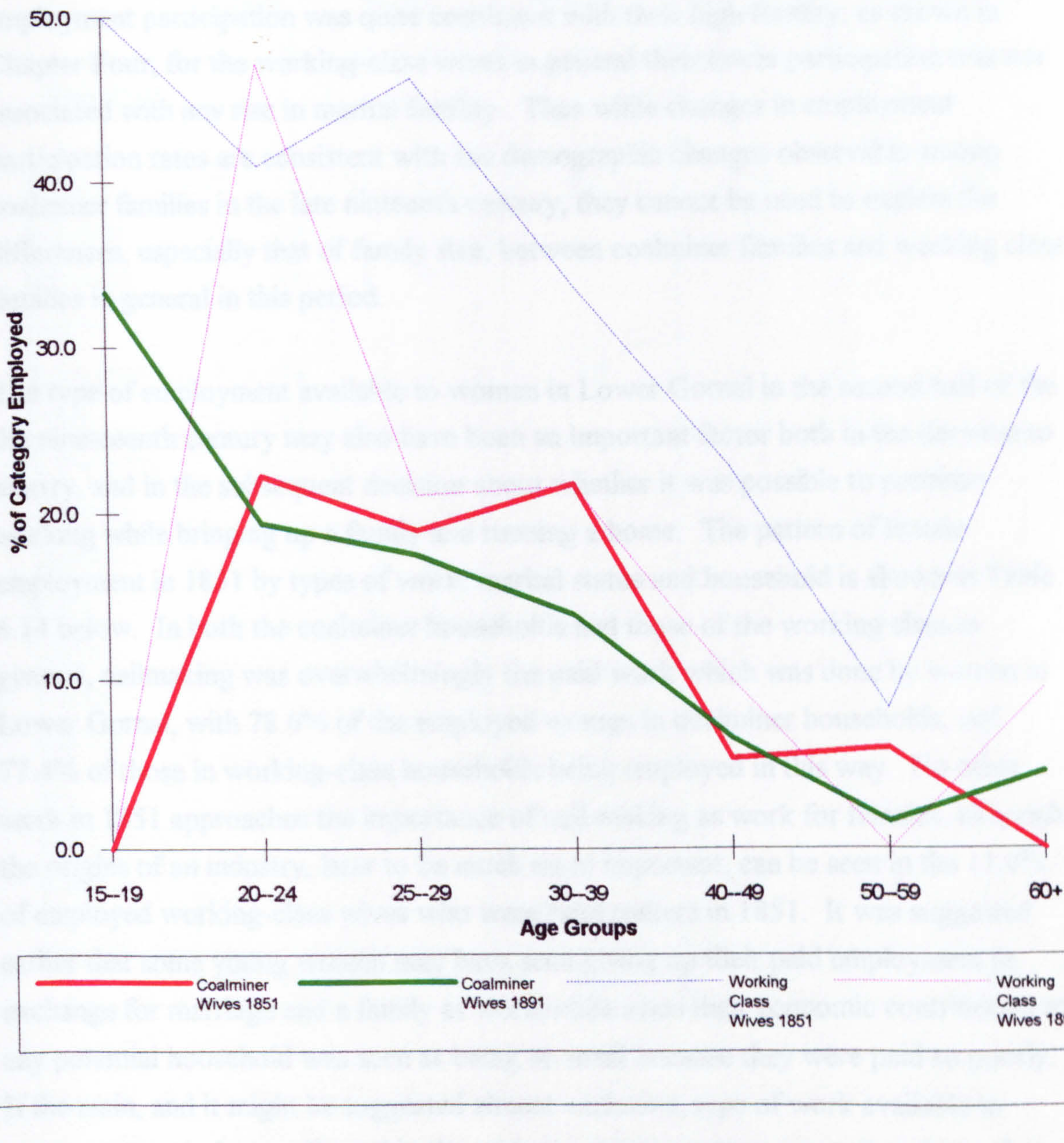
The interpretation can be sharpened by examining the age groups of those women who might be thought to be on the verge of marriage and for whom the possibility of paid employment might be an important factor in forming their decisions to marry or delay marriage until sufficient capital had been accumulated, in order to make the transition into marriage and the setting up of an independent household easier than it would be otherwise. Table 6.12 shows that in Lower Gornal in 1851, 64.5% of the age group of single females aged 15-19, and 65.0% of the age group 20-24 were in paid employment; the corresponding figures for 1891 were even higher at 70.4% and 77.3% of the age groups. It would be reasonable to suppose from these figures that in Lower Gornal in the second half of the nineteenth century, more than two out of every three females of marriageable age were in paid employment. If it is assumed that out of this age group of 15-24 year old females, some would be temporarily unemployed at the time of the Census, some would be involved in purely domestic duties, some might be looking after sick parents, and some might be unable to work on acccount of disabilities unrecorded in the Census, it would not be unreasonable to suggest that all those who could work, were in fact doing so. Even in the coalminer households in Lower Gornal in 1851, Table 6.12 shows that 45.5% of the single females aged 15-19, and 60.0% of those aged 20-24 were, in fact, employed. In 1891 these figures had also risen to 59.5% of the 15-19 years old age group, and 67.4% of the 20-24 age group. Thus even in households where it would be expected that participation in employment might be less since young women were needed for purely household domestic duties, there was still a fairly high level of participation by single females, although the overall participation did not reach the level experienced among their working-class counterparts. Thus there was a fairly high participation rate in paid employment among these two key age groups, whether the females were from working-class households generally or from households involved in coalmining. Therefore, if the opportunity for paid employment was a significant factor in determining female age of marriage, the data from Lower Gornal would seem to support a model of nuptiality in which ages of marriage would be later rather than sooner. The increase in the participation rate of female employment between 1851 and 1891 in Lower Gornal does broadly fit the rise in age of marriage which was tentatively suggested earlier in this Chapter as a likely possible trend in the second half of the nineteenth century. In other words, the greater participation in work by young females meant delayed marriages. However, the relatively low age of marriage in 1851 does not completely accord with the opportunities for paid employment among the young female population demonstrated above. In 1851 young females chose to marry even though there were plenty of work.

If unmarried young females in Lower Gornal were marrying at young ages despite the ready availability of paid work, then some adjustment of the model, in which opportunities for paid employment and levels of nuptiality are linked together, would be required which took into account a number of other considerations: did working class women prefer marriage and a family, and the economic insecurity which might ensue, in preference to work and relative security because of the innate advantages of marriage itself in terms of improving a woman's status in the society in which she lived? Was the economic contribution of young single females to a relationship and potential marriage so small as to be inconsequential in the decision to marry or not? Did working class women not see marriage and family as necessarily excluding them from paid work altogether?

It is impossible to comment on the extent to which the first of these considerations was a factor in working class life in Lower Gornal in the nineteeenth century, and the present writer is not aware of any evidence other than the purely impressionistic literary evidence discussed earlier in this Chapter while examining attitudes towards marriage in general. Certainly Tables 6.12 and 6.13 show that a significant proportion of married working class women in 1851 continued to work up to the age of forty, even those married to coalminers; although by 1891 the levels of employment of working class wives generally fell significantly above the age of thirty. It was noted earlier that despite the age of marriage rising towards the end of the nineteenth century, the level of marital fertility among the coalminer families remained high. Lack of need, desire or opportunity on the part of the wives of coalminers to seek and find paid employment may help to explain this persistence of high fertility levels among the coalminer population well into the twentieth century. Chart 6.18 below shows employment participation levels for the wives of coalminers and working wives generally, and both the lower levels of participation in employment by coalminer wives compared to working class wives generally, and the fall-off in participation by successive age groups can clearly be seen. For the coalminer wives in 1851, the fall off in participation did not really happen significantly until they were over 40, while in 1891 the chart shows that there was a steady fall-off in participation throughout the entire age range, perhaps indicating wives giving up paid employment once the demands of family life made such work difficult. For the working-class wives in 1851, on the other hand, the fall-off in participation began after 30, while in 1891 the fall-off was fairly rapid from 25 years of age. It might be suggested that this higher level of employment participation in 1851 by working class wives is consistent with those demographic differences discussed earlier, especially in respect of different levels of marital fertility, which in turn may have led to differences in family size. (54)

Chart 6.18

Participation Rate in Employment by Wives: Lower Gornal 1851 and 1891



Sources: Census Enumerators' Books 1851; Registrar's District Dudley; PRO Microfilm No HO 1072030

Census Enumerators' Books 1891; Registrar's District Dudley; PRO Microfiche 12/2292 and 12/2292

The low participation rate of the young coalminer wives in 1891, which then fell with successive age groups would seem to be consistent with high marital fertility which made paid employment impossible for all but a very small minority of the wives. The higher levels of participation by the younger working class wives in the 20-24 age group also followed the same pattern as that of the coalminer wives, falling with successive age groups. The difference between the two groups of wives by the end of the nineteenth century was that, while for the coalminer wives their low level of employment participation was quite consistent with their high fertility, as shown in Chapter Four, for the working-class wives in general their lower participation was not associated with any rise in marital fertility. Thus while changes in employment participation rates are consistent with the demographic changes observable among coalminer families in the late ninteenth century, they cannot be used to explain the differences, especially that of family size, between coalminer families and working class families in general in this period.

The type of employment available to women in Lower Gornal in the second half of the the nineteeenth century may also have been an important factor both in the decision to marrry, and in the subsequent decision about whether it was possible to continue working while bringing up a family and running a home. The pattern of female employment in 1851 by types of work, marital status and household is shown in Table 6.14 below. In both the coalminer households and those of the working class in general, nailmaking was overwhelmingly the paid work which was done by women in Lower Gornal, with 78.6% of the employed women in coalminer households, and 77.4% of those in working-class households being employed in this way. No other work in 1851 approaches the importance of nail-making as work for females, although the origins of an industry, later to be much more important, can be seen in the 11.4% of employed working-class wives who were brickmakers in 1851. It was suggested earlier that some young women may have seen giving up their paid employment in exchange for marriage and a family as worthwhile since their economic contribution to any potential household was seen as being so small because they were paid so poorly. If the main, and it might be suggested almost exclusive, type of work available to young women in Lower Gornal in the mid- nineteenth century was nail-making, then the desperately low wages which prevailed in this industry at this time is entirely consistent with the attitude to marriage outlined above. (55)

It was also suggested earlier that some women may not have regarded paid employment and marriage and family as mutually exclusive activities, and that their marital fertility, therefore, would not necessarily be affected by periods of work.

Table 6.14 Female Employment by Household and Marital Status: Lower Gornal 1851

	Coalminer Households						Working Class Households					
	Single		Married		Widowed		Single		Married		Widowed	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Employment												
Nailmaker	32	*72.7*	32	*86.5*	2	*66.7*	75	*71.4*	64	*87.7*	12	70.6
Brickmaker	3	*6.8*					12	*11.4*				
Dressmaker	2	*4.5*	4	*10.8*			5	*4.8*	1	*1.4*		
Labourer							5	*4.8*	3	*4.1*	1	5.9
Bankswoman	3	*6.8*			1	*33.3*	1	*1.0*				
Servant	3	*6.8*					2	*1.9*				
Washerwoman							1	*1.0*			2	11.8
Charwoman							1	*1.0*			2	11.8
Staymaker	1	2.3										
Milliner			1	2.7								
Tailoress							1	*1.0*	1	*1.4*		
Traveller									1	*1.4*		
Stone-miner									1	*1.4*		
Nurse							1	*1.0*				
Schoolmistress							1	*1.0*	1	*1.4*		
Shopkeeper									1	*1.4*		
	44	***100.0***	***37***	***100.0***	***3***	***100.0***	***105***	***100.0***	***73***	***100.0***	***17***	***100.0***

Source: Census Enumerators' Books 1851; Registrar's District Dudley; PRO Microfilm No HO 1072030

Again, nail-making as paid employment for married women was consistent with this atttiude towards work, home and family life. In Lower Gornal in the second half of the nieteenth century the hand nailmaking industry was largely domestic in its organisation, being carried on in small nailshops attached to or at the back of the workers' homes. (56) Those wives who chose to continue to work as nail-makers may have been able to adapt the routines of a domestic industry to fit in with their duties as mothers and wives, despite the hard, physically demanding nature of and long hours necessary in the industry in order to achieve something approaching a worthwhile wage. It must also be remembered that for the very poor almost any return was worthwhile. Nailmaking did not usually involve women going out to a place of work as such, since even when they did not have nailshops at the rear of their own homes they frequently shared a nailmaking hearth with neighbours, and therefore did not have to travel any distance to work. The absence of shift work in the Black Country coal mines meant that coalminer wives did not have to cope with their husbands and sons working in the industry, returning at different times and thus disrupting the domestic routine, and thus making employment for them virtually impossible. With some of their children at school, there may have been fairly long periods during the day when married women could work at making nails, and if there were daughters in the family who also worked as nail-makers, then domestic duties could be shared among the females, thus allowing all to continue working. Thus the nature of work available to women in Lower Gornal in the mid-nineteenth century is not inconsistent with the attitudes to marriage and family suggested above, although there is no evidence to corroborate such a suggestion.

By 1891 the availability of nail-making as employment for females was not as important as it had been in 1851, and this can be seen in Table 6.15, which shows that only 33.5% of employed women in coalminer households, and 43.0% of those in working-class households generally were employed as such in 1891. Brick-making and tailoring had now become important industries in Lower Gornal and these necessitated women going out to work, and thus were not so consistent with the attitude suggested above in which marriage and family were not necessarily seen as precluding some kind of paid work. This change by 1891 in the nature of work available may help to explain the rapid fall off in participation in employment by wives over 25 already noted and outlined in Table 6.15 below, since once married and having children, they could not go out to work. Thus the relative lack of employment by 1891, which could be fitted into family life without significant disruption, can, in part, help to explain the continued high marital fertility of coalminer wives in 1891. However, it does not, as was pointed out above, help to explain the differences in family size between the coalminers and the

Table 6.15 Female Employment by Household and Marital Status: Lower Gornal 1891

	Coalminer Households						Working Class Households					
	Single		Married		Widowed		Single		Married		Widowed	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Employment												
Nailmaker	34	*23.4*	32	*57.1*	2	*100.0*	27	*35.1*	15	*45.5*	13	72.2
Brickmaker	37	*25.5*	13	*23.2*			12	*15.6*	6	*18.2*	1	5.6
Dressmaker	20	*13.8*	4	*7.1*			12	*15.6*	7	*21.2*		
Labourer	6	*4.1*					8	*10.4*			2	11.1
Bankswoman	1	*0.7*										
Servant	9	*6.2*					4	*5.2*				
Washerwoman							1	*1.3*				
Charwoman							1	*1.3*				
Staymaker												
Milliner												
Tailoress	33	*22.8*	3	*5.4*			11	*14.3*	3	*9.1*		
Traveller												
Stone-miner												
Nurse	1	*0.7*										
Schoolmistress	1	*0.7*										
Shopkeeper			1	*1.8*			1	*1.3*			1	5.6
Retort maker	2	*1.4*									1	5.6
Sand dealer			1	*1.8*								
Fruit dealer			1	*1.8*								
Hosier			1	*1.8*								
Barmaid	1	*0.7*										
Seamstress									1	*3.0*		
Shoemaker									1	*3.0*		
	145	***100.0***	**56**	***100.0***	**2**	***100.0***	**77**	***100.0***	**33**	***100.0***	**18**	***100.0***

Source: Census Enumerators' Books 1891; Registrar's District Dudley; PRO Microfiche 12/2291 and 12/2292

working class generally. It must also be remembered that the improvements in the wages of coalminers at the end of the nineteenth century may also have made the need for wives to seek paid employment seem less imperative and occur less frequently, and this must, almost certainly, have played some part in maintaining high levels of marital fertility in coalmining families into the twentieth century.

It remains to examine whether there were any differences in female employment participation rates in a community like Cradley where coalminers were not a significant proportion of the population, and where the coalminer population has been shown to have very similar demographic characteristics to the rest of the working-class population with whom they lived and worked. Tables 6.16 and 6.17 below present the data for employment participation by females in Cradley in 1851 and 1891. It should be noted immediately just how similar the level of employment by females from coalminer households was to that in working-class households generally, both in 1851 and 1891: 44.8% and 49.8% of females employed overall in coalminer and working class households respectively in 1851; and 33.1% and 32.8% in 1891. In 1851 the proportions of both single and married females who were working was also very similar in both types of household. If the detailed pattern of participation is examined then, again, the levels by individual age groups are remarkably the same, as is the fall-off in employment participation by married women. These similarities can clearly be seen in Chart 6.19 which details the participation levels of wives in employment in 1851 and 1891.

By 1891 some differences in the detailed pattern of participation were beginning to emerge with fewer of the young coalminer females aged 15-24 working, compared to their working-class counterparts; however in 1891 more of the married coalminer wives were continuing to work after marriage and family than in the working-class households generally. These differences between the participation rates by wives can be seen clearly in Chart 6.19. The fall-off in participation by wives in paid employment was somewhat steeper for the working class wives than those of the coalminers', and the coalminer wives also maintained a higher level of participation in work throughout the 20-49 age groups. Thus with the single exception of the coalminer wives, there was, by 1891, a general lowering of the level of participation in work compared to 1851. This notion that wives did not work generally is supported by the only piece of oral evidence the present writer has found relevant to Black Country family history in the late nineteenth century. George Dunn who was born in 1887, and went on the become a chainmaker said that there were no married women employed in his youth:

Table 6.16 **Female Employment by Household and Marital Status: Cradley 1851**

	Coalminer Households						Working Class Households					
	Single		Married		Widowed		Single		Married		Widowed	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Employment												
Nail-maker	5	*83.3*	6	*85.7*			33	*61.1*	23	53.5	1	33.3
Chain-maker							4	*7.4*	10	23.3		
Dressmaker	1	*16.7*					4	*7.4*	2	*4.7*		
Labourer							1	*1.9*	1	*2.3*		
Servant							8	*14.8*				
Washerwoman			1	*14.3*			1	*1.9*	2	*4.7*	1	33.3
Trace-maker							2	*3.7*	1	*2.3*		
Umbrella-maker							1	*1.9*				
Waggoner									1	*2.3*		
Shoe-maker									1	*2.3*		
Puddler									1	*2.3*		
Huckster											1	33.3
Governess									1	*2.3*		
	6	*100.0*	7	*100.0*	0	*0.0*	54	*100.0*	43	*100.0*	3	100.0

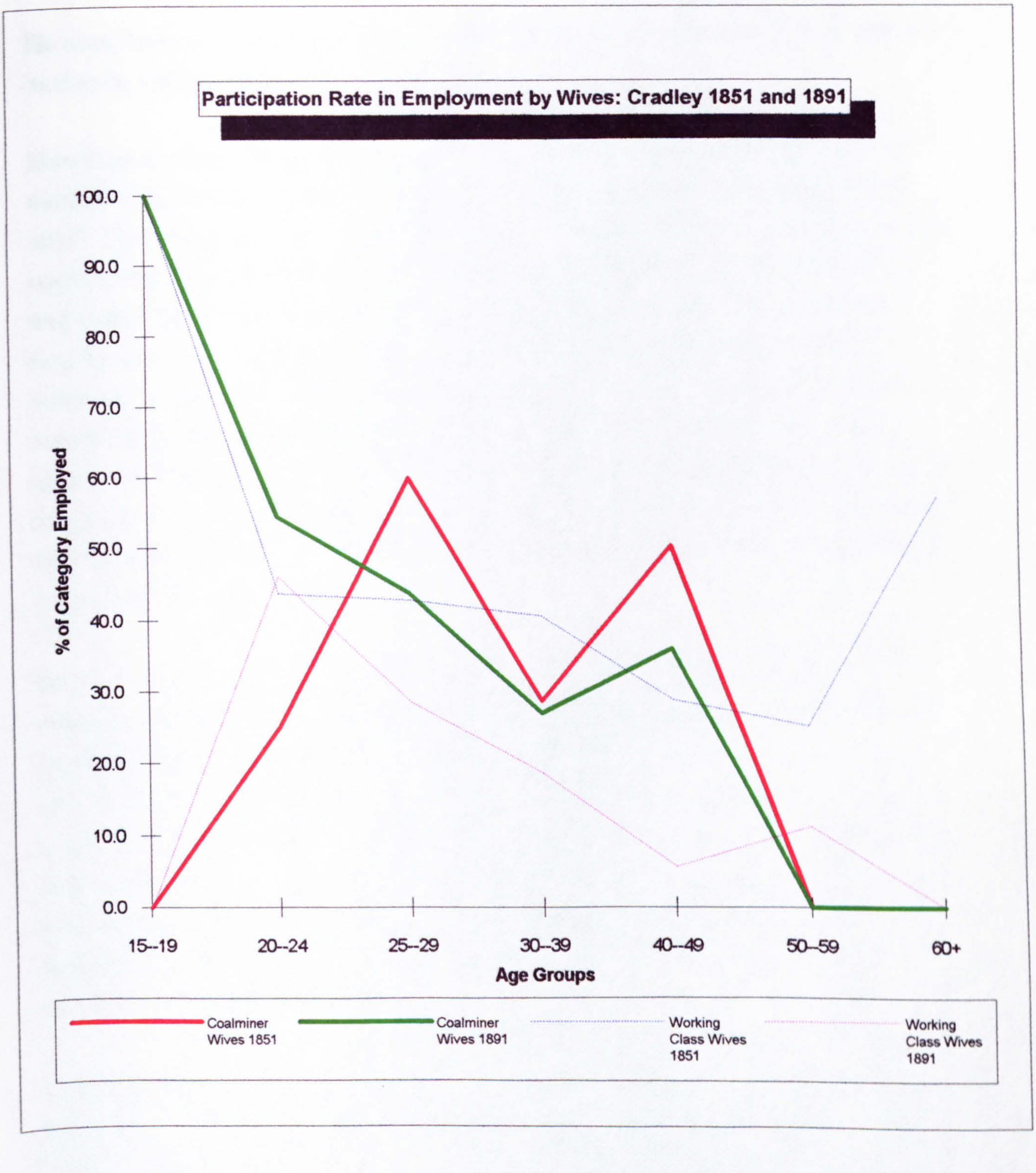
Source: Census Enumerators' Books 1851; Registrar's District Halesowen; PRO Microfilm No HO 1072034

Table 6.17 **Female Employment by Household and Marital Status: Cradley 1891**

	Coalminer Households						Working Class Households					
	Single		Married		Widowed		Single		Married		Widowed	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Employment												
Nailmaker	1	5.9	1	3.8					2	10.0	1	33.3
Chainmaker	6	35.3	13	50.0	1	100.0	22	59.5	14	70.0		
Brickmaker	2	11.8	4	15.4			1	2.7	1	5.0		
Dressmaker	4	23.5	3	11.5			3	8.1	2	10.0		
Labourer	1	5.9	1	3.8								
Servant	1	5.9					5	13.5				
Washerwoman											1	33.3
Charwoman			1	3.8			1	2.7			1	33.3
Tailoress	1	5.9	1	3.8			3	8.1				
Schoolmistress							1	2.7				
Shopkeeper			2	7.7			1	2.7	1	5.0		
Mill worker	1	5.9										
	17	100.0	26	100.0	1	100.0	37	100.0	20	100.0	3	100.0

Source: Census Enumerators' Books 1891; Registrar's District Stourbridge; Sub-District Halesowen; PRO Microfiche 375 1B

Chart 6.19



Sources: Census Enumerators' Books 1851; Registrar's District Halesowen; PRO Microfilm No HO 1072034

Census Enumerators' Books 1891; Registrar's District Stourbridge; Sub-District Halesowen;
PRO Microfiche 375 1B

It didn't matter what they worked at, when they got married, they'n finished. Their job was 'ouswork.

(57)

He does, however, modify this later, admitting that married women did work with their husbands, making chains.

How then do these levels of participation discussed above accord with the model of nuptiality and marital fertility outlined in the discussion earlier of the Lower Gornal data? The overall level and pattern of female employment in 1851 in Cradley, showing opportunities for paid work, would be entirely consistent with a model of nuptiality and marital fertility which showed delayed marriage and possibly subdued marital fertility as some young women chose work instead of marriage, and some wives continued working and delayed the start of families, or returned to work once they considered that their families were complete. Certainly in Cradley in 1851 it has already been demonstrated that both coalminer and working class families were similar in size, at 4.4 persons, and that this size was smaller than coalminer families in Lower Gornal, at 5.0 persons, in 1851, and closer to the general working class level there, at 4.5 persons per family. (58)

By 1891, if the model of nuptiality and marital fertility outlined above is accurate, it would be expected that the decline in employment participation levels both by young unmarried females and by married women would perhaps encourage early marriage and the maintenance of high married fertlity leading perhaps in turn to larger family sizes. This, in fact, was what happened in Cradley, where family size had increased for both coalminer and working class families in general to 4.8 persons per family in 1891. It is not possible to say that there was a causal link between the two observable features, lower participation in employment and higher family size, but they are certainly consistent with each other.

Comparison is made in Charts 6.20, 6.21, 6.22 and 6.23 between the wives of Cradley and those of Lower Gornal in both 1851 and 1891. In 1851 the coalminer wives of Cradley maintained their level of participation in employment at a higher rate and for longer than the wives in Lower Gornal. If this in turn led to lower marital fertility this would be entirely consistent with the smaller family sizes recorded in Cradley compared to Lower Gornal in 1851. (59) The working-class wives in both communities had very similar participation levels in 1851 from the age of 20 onwards, and, again, this is consistent with similar levels of marital fertility, and the similar family sizes recorded for the two groups in 1851. (60) In 1891 the coalminer wives of

Chart 6.20

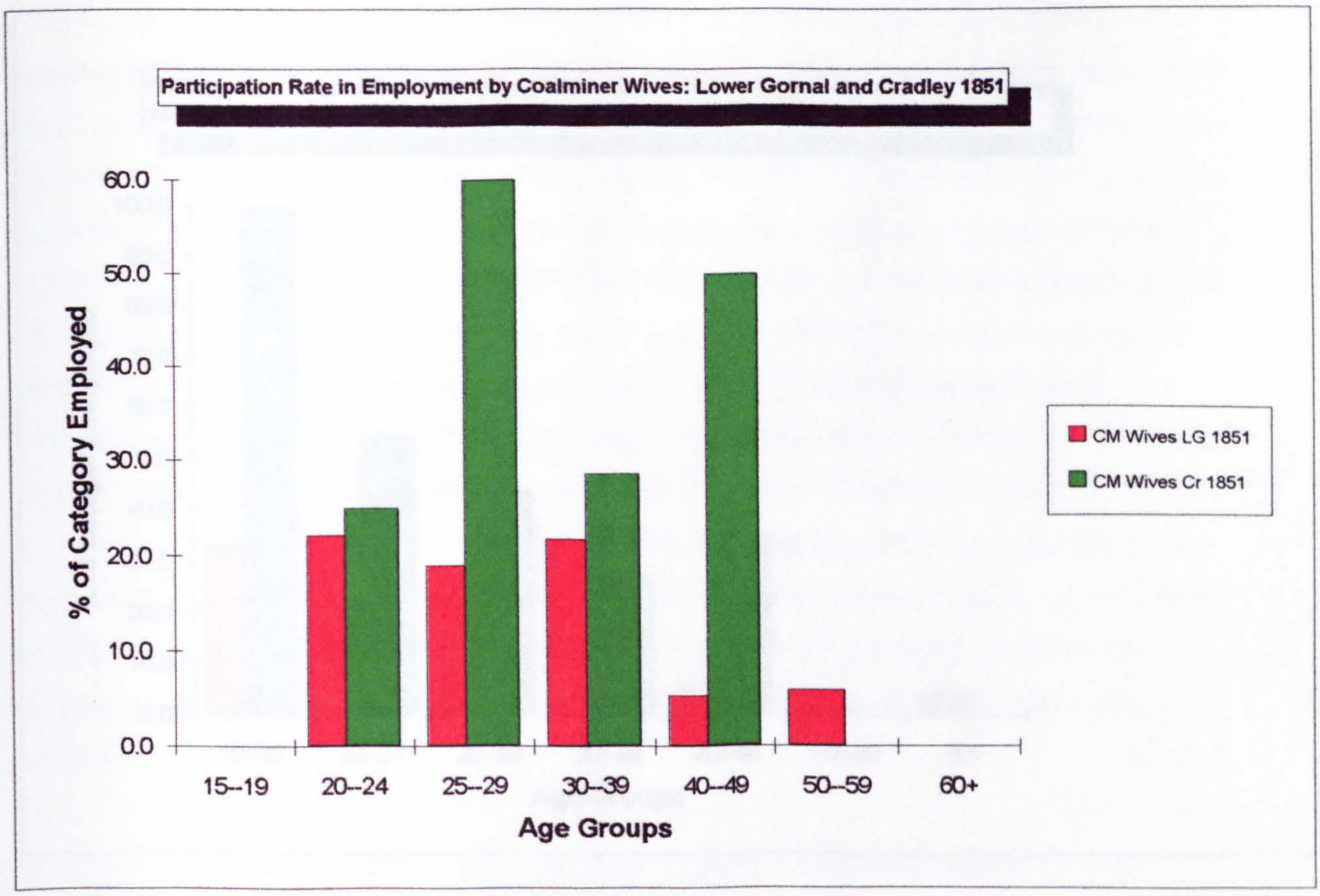
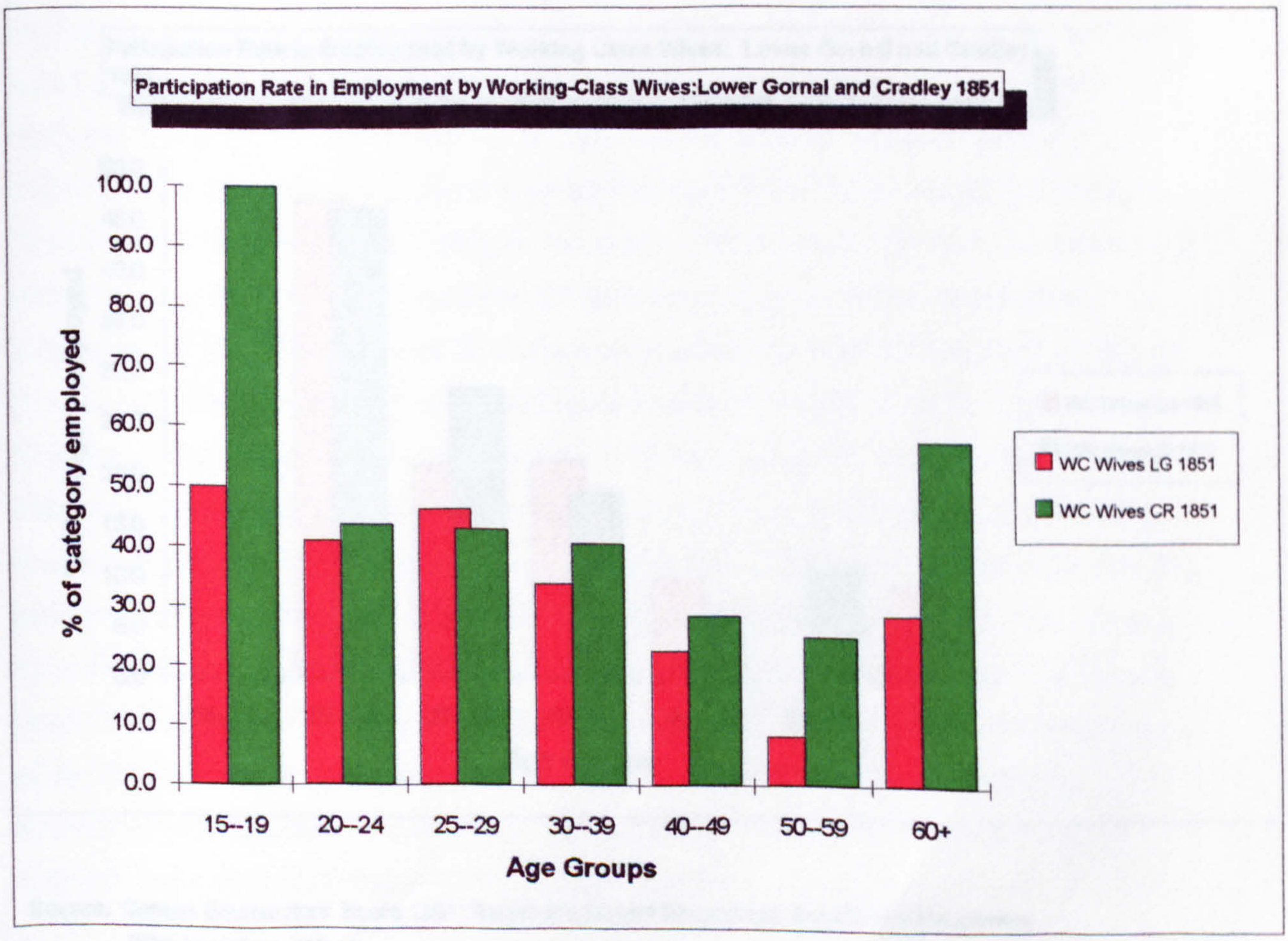


Chart 6.21



Sources: Census Enumerators' Books 1851; Registrar's District Halesowen; PRO Microfilm No HO 1072034
Census Enumerators' Books 1851; Registrar's District Dudley; PRO Microfilm No HO 1072030

Chart 6.22

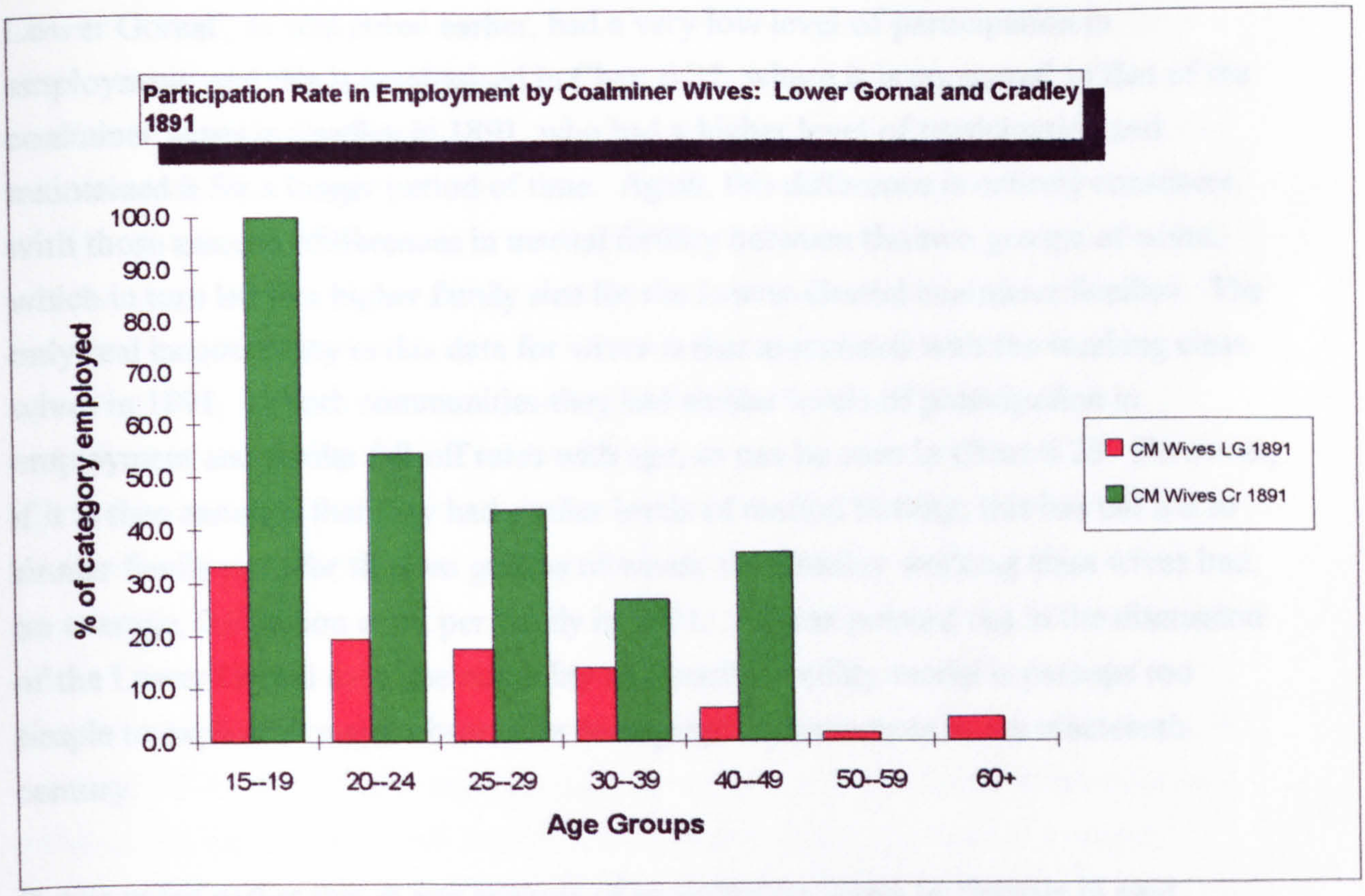
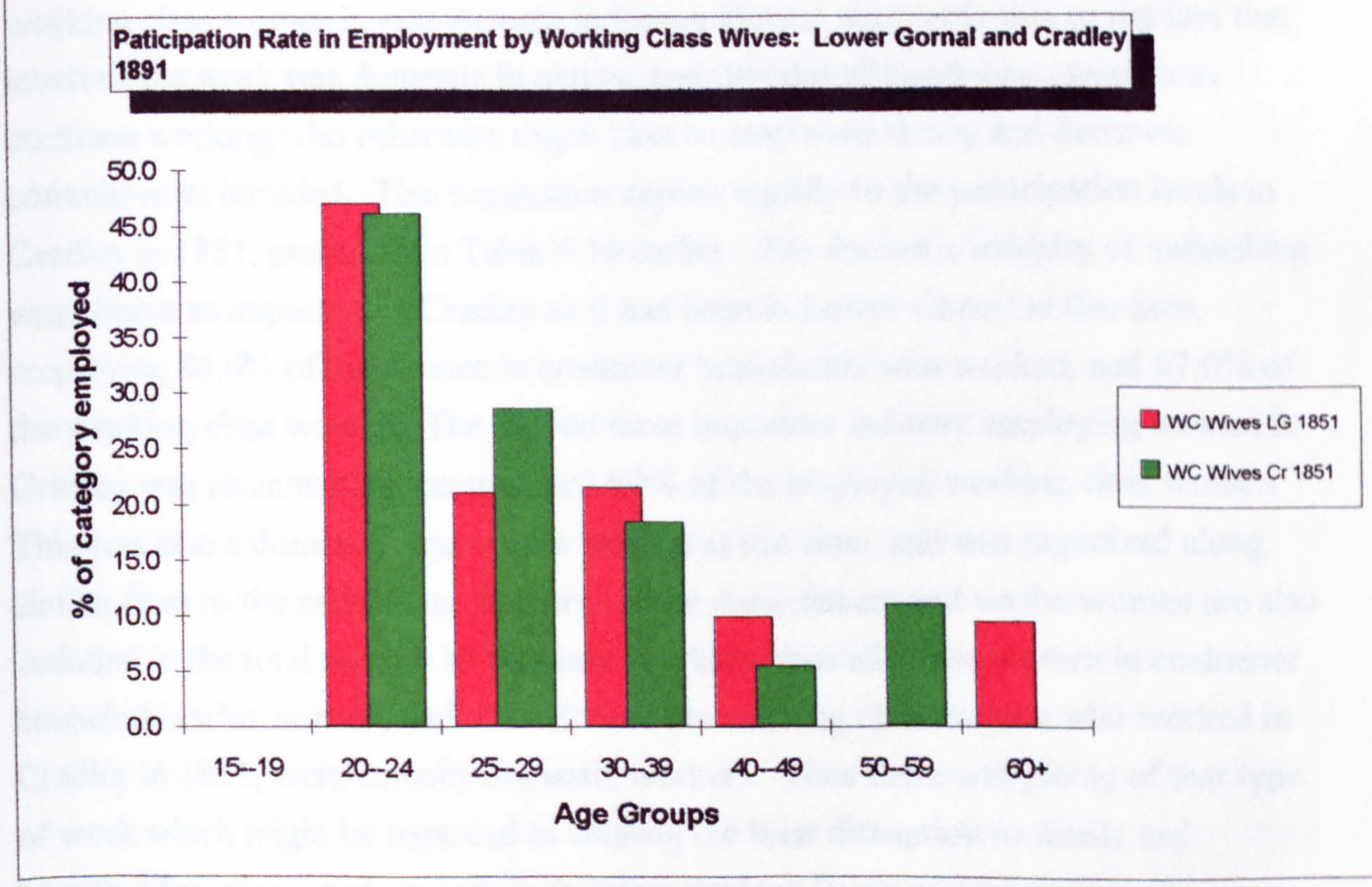


Chart 6.23



Source: Census Enumerators' Books 1891; Registrar's District Stourbridge; Sub-District Halesowen; PRO Microfiche 375 1B

Census Enumerators' Books 1891; Registrar's District Dudley; PRO Microfiche 12/2291 and 12/2292

Lower Gornal , as was noted earlier, had a very low level of participation in employment, and this is emphasised in Chart 6.22. where it is compared to that of the coalminer wives in Cradley in 1891, who had a higher level of participation and maintained it for a longer period of time. Again, this difference is entirely consistent with those assumed differences in marital fertility between the two groups of wives, which in turn led to a higher family size for the Lower Gornal coalminer families. The only real inconsistency in this data for wives is that associated with the working class wives in 1891. In both communities they had similar levels of participation in employment and similar fall-off rates with age, as can be seen in Chart 6.23. However, if it is then assumed that they had similar levels of marital fertility, this has not led to similar family sizes for the two groups of wives: the Cradley working class wives had, on average, 0.5 person extra per family in 1891. As was pointed out in the discussion of the Lower Gornal data, the nuptiality and marital fertility model is perhaps too simple to explain all major observable demographic phenomena in the nineteenth century.

It was noted earlier that in any analysis of participation levels by females in paid employment, the type of work available to them in the second half of the nineteenth century was very important. It was suggested that the high levels of participation by working class women in employment in Lower Gornal was partly due to the fact that much of the work was domestic in nature, and that this allowed many women to continue working who otherwise might have to stop once family and domestic commitments intruded. This suggestion applies equally to the participation levels in Cradley in 1851, presented in Table 6.16 earlier. The domestic industry of nailmaking was almost as important in Cradley as it had been in Lower Gornal at this time, employing 84.6% of the women in coalminer households who worked, and 57.0% of the working-class women. The second most important industry employing women in Cradley was chainmaking, occupying 14.0% of the employed working class women. This was also a domestic industry for women at this time, and was organized along similar lines to the nailmaking industry. If the dressmakers and washerwomen are also included in the total number of domestic workers, then all of the women in coalminer households who worked, and over 70% of the working class women who worked in Cradley in 1851, were actually domestic workers. Thus there was plenty of that type of work which might be regarded as causing the least disruption to family and household routines, and consequently relatively high levels of participation in employment which was maintained into married life.

Table 6.17 reconstructs the pattern of employment by type of females in Cradley in 1891. By this date the domestic industry of nailmaking had all but disappeared in Cradley in 1891, employing only 5 women in total; but chainmaking had increased in importance in the overall pattern of employment for women, accounting for only 45.5% of the women in coalminer households who worked, and 60.0% of the working class women. If other domestic employment is again included in the overall number of domestic workers, then over 65% of the women in coalminer households who worked, and over 75% of the working class women who worked in Cradley in 1851, were actually domestic workers. However, a paradox emerges here since these continued opportunities in 1891 for domestic work had not resulted in high levels of participation or the maintenance of levels of participation after marriage. There was a fall-off in participation in employment in Cradley just as there had been in Lower Gornal in 1891, despite the greater availability of domestic work in Cradley compared to Lower Gornal. Other factors, like, for example, the wage levels of men, must have been at work by 1891. In both communities this fall-off in participation in employment was consistent with higher marital fertility and the larger family size which resulted.

(g) Calculative Instrumentality or Caring?

Much of the explanation for the type of sharing which occurred in coalminer and working class household generally in both Lower Gornal an Cradley in the second half of the nineteenth century has been discussed in the last Chapter, but one issue raised in the historiography is perhaps worth considering in more detail. Michael Anderson has argued that the fundamental explanation for the relationships between members of a family who shared households lay in the calculative instrumental orientation of these relationships. (61) By this it is taken to mean that kin maintained relationships with each other because it was in their short-term mutual interests to do so, and the benefits and disadvantages of maintaining such relationships were carefully balanced. Anderson used the volume and the pattern of such relationships in the households of Preston in 1851 to support this argument, with very little other supporting evidence. Almost one in four of the Preston households were shared with kin and therefore maintaining these relationships, he argues, must have been important to a significant proportion of the population; moreover, the pattern of these relationships would seem to show that the participants must have gained something from the relationships otherwise why would they have been maintained? (62) The argument has a kind of simplistic plausibility about it: it sounds as if it might be true. However, this does not

mean, of course, that it actually explains the reality of why these relationships between family members were maintained in the nineteenth century.

The 'instrumental usefulness' of kin to the families with whom they shared accomodation is also demonstrated by Elizabeth Roberts from the oral evidence she collected for 1890-1940. She found about one-third of the families she sampled in Barrow and Lancaster had co-resident kin living with them at some time, or were themselves living with members of their extended families. Motherless children went to live with relatives, old people lived with, and were usually cared for, by their adult children, children lived with their grandparents, or aunts and uncles, because their own homes were overcrowded, and adults with no other home lived with relatives and paid for their accommodation. (63) However, she differed from Anderson in her assessment of the motives for sharing, finding that *"the vast majority of respondents display a mixture of love, duty and pride in their attitudes towards their relatives"*. (64) In fact she found it almost impossible to find any examples of a calculative attitude towards kin. Thus, we have a sociological model of kin relationships supported by patterns observable from Census data and very little else, and an inevitably biased collection of oral reminiscences in which the witnesses do not profess any calculation in their decisions to share with relatives, separated by something like fifty years of the nineteenth century.

Anderson's calculative instrumentality was probably not new to the nineteenth century and was not a product of industrialisation, and in some form must have been present in many households before. Beatrice Gottlieb maintains, again on a slight evidential base, that positive and negative feelings about kinship and a structure of benefits and obligations were present in households throughout the four hundred year period leading up to the industrialisation of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. (65) In households where there were co-resident kin there were givers and takers of both practical functions like shelter, food and small loans; and also emotional functions like the feeling of belonging to a group; and, moreover, given that much of human behaviour cannot be easily explained, many of the givers of benefits would feel that they had received a great deal in return. (66) Can we use words like *"instrumental"* to describe the motives which lay behind such decisions to share households with kin and allow them the benefits which followed? More importantly, can we use the word *"calculative"* to describe how people in the past reached a decision to allow kin to live with them or not? Indeed, how did people in the past measure the benefits and count the costs of such sharing with kin, especially those which might be called emotional?

Can the evidence of co-residency in the working class populations of Lower Gornal and Cradley add anything to this discussion? Certainly, the Census evidence discussed in the last Chapter shows all the categories of relatives referred to by Elizabeth Roberts above, as being co-resident in Black Country homes in the second half of the nineteenth century, and the patterns observable in this co-residency were also discussed at some length. If the volume of such relationships is to be used to argue their importance, then the evidence from the working class population of Lower Gornal and Cradley does not support a hypothesis which maintains that sharing with kin must have been important because there was so much of it. It was shown in the last Chapter that sharing households with kin was not common and the possible reasons for this were rehearsed. The working class population of the Black Country may have simply been less successful than their counterparts in Preston at counteracting the destructive and divisive forces of industrialisation which had torn families apart. On the other hand they may have calculated that the maintenance of these relationships was, in the short-term, simply not very beneficial to them. Why, after all, should they seek to maintain contact with kin who provided them with no obvious benefits in the short-term? The quantitative evidence can, of course, give no clues about the motivations of the people involved.

There is some evidence from the Black Country which might help to explain the volume or pattern of sharing with kin. A writer in the Edinburgh Review of April 1863 must have found some evidence for his argument that ties of kinship were felt very strongly in the Black Country, and, no doubt for his Scottish readers, he even compares them in strength to those of the Highland clans. Black Country families, he believes, cling together, usually for the wrong reasons, *and "are ready to stand by each other to the uttermost"*. (67) The writer sees the motives behind such behaviour as stemming from warm feelings and a *"quick sense of kindness"* in times of difficulty and distress, with and acute awareness of neglect and injustice. This atttitude of caring arising from such an awareness as that of neglect or injustice can be seen in some of the court cases reported in the local press. In the same year a Black Country woman was given penal servitude for life for killing her stepson and evidence was given against her by a neighbour who had often fed her son because he was neglected so much. The mother was not displaying the caring attitude mentioned above, but the neighbour was demonstrating feelings of kindness to the boy, whom she felt was being treated badly. Obviously such feelings as those described above were present in neighbours and not limited just to kin. (68) The local press can also be used to show that sharing with kin, far from providing mutual benefits, actually caused marital disharmony. In February, 1880 a Black Country husband found himself charged with assaulting his

wife, although his wife told the court that he had been well-behaved previously; she then told the court that the reason for this change in her husband's behaviour towards her was having to live with his mother, and that she would be perfectly happy to live with her husband if they could move away from this parent. (69) In May 1880 a Black Country miner, charged with assaulting his sister with whom he shared a house, told the court that he would do six months hard labour rather than promise to keep the peace by not asssaulting her again. (70) Another husband in court in April 1875 for blacking his sister's eye defended himself by maintaining that he was merely settling a domestic dispute between his sister and his wife. (71) Such evidence as this comes, obviously, from cases where the breakdown of family relationships has been so severe that it can only be resolved by a court of law. Such incidents may have been the tip of a large submerged iceberg of shared households in crisis, as family members found the constraints of co-residence too great to bear in peace and harmony. On the other hand, of course, they might be viewed as totally atypical incidents, rare occurrences among an otherwise caring population. The breakdowns exemplified by these incidents might help to explain the short-term nature of much of the calculative instrumentality put forward by Michael Anderson: sharing with caring until this broke down and was replaced by other arrangements.

None of this explains, however, why, if the short-term benefits of sharing with kin were so important to the working class population of Preston in 1851, they should not have been equally so to that of the Black Country, as exemplified by Lower Gornal and Cradley in 1851, at least in so far as the volume of these relationships was concerned. There is no reason to suppose that sharing with kin was viewed in a fundamentally different light in the Black Country compared to other areas, as having no beneficial instrumentality. Nor is it easy to accept the argument that the disruptive effects of industrialisation had a greater impact in the Black Country, thereby making successful maintenance of relationship with kin more difficult. Indeed, it might even be argued that industrialisation caused less dislocation in the Black Country and, therefore, there was less need for sharing. It has been shown earlier in Chapter Two that, in Lower Gornal particularly in the mid-nineteeenth century, the working class community was fairly stable and settled, and yet they were not able to successfully maintain relationships with kin to the same degree as the working class population of Preston for example. Perhaps the answer lies in the overall levels of poverty experienced by the working class community in the Black Country: families did not share with kin because they were simply too poor. In a sense this is a kind of negative calculative instrumentality in that families realised that in the short term most benefits accrued to

them by not sharing at all, or, at most, having a very narrow view of who constituted *'kin'*, with only the closest and most needy relatives falling into the category.

NOTES for CHAPTER SIX

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3 **R.Mitchinson**, *British Population Change Since 1860*, (1977), p.74

4 'The Staffordshire Colliers', Broadside, William Salt Library, Stafford; quoted in **J.Raven**, *The Folklore and Songs of the Black Country Colliers*, (1990), p.18

5 Ibid.

6 'Collier Lass - Love Song', from *Hackwood Collections*, Wednesbury Central Library; quoted in J.Raven, *The Folklore and Songs of the Black Country Colliers*, (1990), p. 25

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8 **D.Vincent**, *Bread, Knowledge and Freedom*, (1981), p.50

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12 *The Dudley Guardian*, February 6th, 1875

13 *The Wolverhampton Spirit of the Times*, August 20th, 1859; April 6th, 1861; August 17th, 1861; August 24th, 1861; November 30th, 1861; February 22nd, 1862; June 20th, 1863; April 23rd, 1864; June 11th, 1864; June 18th, 1864; August 6th, 1864; March 11th, 1865;
The Wolverhampton Journal and Mining District Advertiser, January 26th, 1861; February 16th, 1861; March 30th, 1861;
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23 R.Outhwaite., op.cit., p.55-70

24 Ibid., p.69

25 M.Mills, op.cit., p.45

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CHAPTER SEVEN

The Conclusion

What can the study of the family composition of an occupational group like the coalminers in two relatively obscure Black Country communities in the second half of the nineteenth century, add to our overall knowledge and understanding of working class history, of the coalminers as an occupational group, and to the history of the Black Country generally? What has the methodology used in this Thesis added to way in which historians can examine, describe and analyse social groups in the past?

This Thesis has fulfilled four important aims and one which might be considered as subsidiary. In the first place, in its methodology, it has looked at coalminers from two different angles: viewing them as an occupation group varying in size and importance amongst other occupation groups within working-class communities; and viewing them across a span of time which would allow significant changes in their demography to emerge clearly. In the second place, the methodology has allowed one more building block of knowledge to be added to what is already known about working-class, and coalminer family life in particular, and thus increase the sum of our knowledge. Thirdly, it has addressed some of those gaps which exist in our knowledge of a particular social group at specific points in time, and which were highlighted in the review of the historiography. Fourthly, it has challenged some of the opinions and views outlined in the historiography, particularly in respect of family life, in order that a synthesis might take place in our reconstruction of that rich foreign world we call the past. On a subsidiary level, the Thesis has also added to the overall knowledge of the Black Country in the second half of the nineteenth century: a period of time when the explosive developments of earlier industrialisation were being consolidated; a period of time during which the working class may actually have been able to reap some of the rewards of earlier uncontrolled economic exploitation; and a period during which the working class were having to adapt to the consequences of the earlier economic development of the area. Thus this Thesis may be seen as a piece of Black Country social history in its description and interpretation of working-class life.

The Methodology

This Thesis has used an innovative methodology of comparison which might serve as a model for further research, either of working-class occupational groups, or of the wider social history of the Black Country and other areas. Historians who have looked at the coalminers either as an occupational group or as a community, have tended to use those settlements or communities in which coalminers were coterminous with the community or settlement being examined. In such communities or settlements almost the entire workforce were coalminers, and those historians who have used these areas for their research have, quite rightly, pointed out the particular demographic differences which such populations of coalminers develop, compared to the rest of the working class. Quite rightly too, they have emphasised the importance of occupation as a factor determining the behavioural attitudes in these communities of coalminers. It is usually accepted in these studies, however, that the specific occupation of coalmining has been responsible for particular behavioural attitudes, and that these in turn have caused the particular demographic structures observable in coalminer settlements.

In many working-class settlements and communities, however, coalminers formed a substantial part of the community, but not the whole of it, whilst in others, they formed just one occupational group amongst many others. The present writer believes it is important to analyse occupational groups as part of the wider working-class in this way since in many areas this would have been the typical socio-economic structure. This Thesis is significant for the stress which it places in its methodology on the importance of examining an occupational group within the wider socio-economic community of which it formed a part. This methodology will allow analysis of the household demography of such groups of coalminers in two different communities: one in which the principal occupation was coalmining, and in which a substantial proportion of the households were headed by a coalminer; and one in which the principal occupation was metalworking, and in which households headed by a coalminer were but a small proportion of the total. In such communities, coalminers may have developed household structures not very different to the rest of the working class because their behavioural attitudes were more open to the influence of those of the rest of the working class with whom they lived. The methodology thus allows the historian to examine, and ask questions about, the importance of factors other than those associated purely with occupation, which might have influenced the structure of households.

If behavioural attitudes were important in determining the household and family structure of particular occupational groups, then it is important for historians to examine those occupational groups in different socio-economic contexts. This might allow the historian to assess the relative importance of those factors determining behavioural attitudes, especially the significance of occupation. In a community in which coalminers formed a significant, but not exclusive occupational group, it is important to examine whether they have developed different household structures to those of coalminers who lived in communities consisting, almost exclusively, of nothing but coalminers. If they had developed different structures, does this mean that occupation alone was less important than other factors in determining the behavioural attitudes lying behind their household structures? Or, at least, that occupation as a causative factor, was only one amongst many? In such a community the coalminers may have preserved something of their special identity as a distinct occupational group, and may have retained many of those behavioural attitudes associated with the occupation, while at the same time, they can hardly have avoided those attitudes prevalent in the community as a whole. They may have worked separately to the rest of the working-class community, but they lived and played amongst other workers, and it is reasonable to suppose that they would have been influenced by the attitudes prevalent in the community as a whole. These wider community attitudes may well have served to modify those attitudes which can be seen as originating largely from the nature of coalmining as an occupation.

It is equally important to examine coalminers in communities in which they were not a significant occupational group. In such communities it may have been impossible for coalminers to preserve a totally separate occupational identity with a distinct set of behavioural attitudes. Here they might reasonably be expected to display the attitudes prevalent in the community as a whole, and to have household and family structures similar to those of the rest of the community. The methodology adopted in this Thesis allows examination of such groups of coalminers to be made, by examining them as a discrete occupational group, but also as part of the overall working-class community in which they lived. The methodology allows questions to be asked about the importance of occupation as a factor determining behaviour, by examining similarities and differences in household and family structure which may be presumed to result from different sets of behavioural attitudes among the working-class community. In doing so, it also emphasises the complex web of factors which determine social attitudes and behaviour.

In this Thesis, a discrete occupational group, the coalminers, has been clearly identified and disaggregated from the Census data at a point in time; this group has then be compared with the rest of the working class with whom they lived at one place in time; the occupational group can also be compared over time in order to examine change and continuity; the chosen occupational group in one community can also be compared with the same occupational group in a different type of community. The two communities chosen for study in this Thesis may have been just two relatively obscure Black Country communities, but the strength of the comparison lies in the fact that they were microcosms probably typical of working-class society in many other places. These microcosms have revealed something of the mechanisms of social life, and especially the relationships which existed within the household, the nature of family formation, and from which, perhaps, the attitudinal and cultural structures lying behind all social groupings, may be inferred. In focusing thus on small microcosms, it has helped to avoid over-emphasis on the 'meaningless mean', in which quite disparate social groups, possibly with divergent attitudes and behaviour, are averaged out, thereby losing their distinctiveness and individual characteristics.

Moreover, by comparing an occupational group like the coalminers in such communities over a fairly broad expanse of time, the methodology allows the historian to look for important elements of continuity and change. The second half of the nineteenth century saw a period of relative stability for the working class after the turbulent years in the earlier part of the century. Examination of an occupational group at the beginning of this period and towards the end of it will allow any changes in family and household structure, in this important period of consolidation in working-class history, to become evident.

The methodology of comparison used in this Thesis may also prove to be a useful tool in further research which would add to the overall picture of working-class life in the nineteenth century. Useful studies may emerge of coalminers in different communities at different points in time as Census data becomes available. More research may be made into other occupational groups within the Black Country in order to compare them with coalminers, or in quite different communities with different socio-economic structures. Further research at the microcosmic level used in this Thesis may be able to establish the nature of the link between, changes in local economies leading to improvements in their standard of living, and those attitudinal factors which governed marriage, family formation and household composition. Further research may also reveal the nature of the impact on community attitudes as a whole, which concentrations of particular occupational groups had, and, indeed, what levels of

concentration were necessary for a group to exert an impact on the rest of society. Was it a one-way impact or were the behavioural attitudes and cultural norms of a particular occupational group, like the coalminers, modified by the rest of the community in which they lived, and what were the mechanisms of this impact and possible modification?

The Quantitative Data

This Thesis has made a significant contribution to knowledge of the structure of coalminer and working class households in the second half of the nineteenth century. The analysis of the quantitative data obtained from the Census, notwithstanding its limitations in providing only snapshots, has demonstrated that the demographic structure of a social group, and in particular its age profile, can fundamentally affect its overall level of fertility and mean family size. Mid-nineteenth century reformers and moralists did see large families in coalminer households, but they might also have been observing a young adult population of coalminers which would naturally have produced many young children. The analysis of the data for the coalminer families of Lower Gornal in 1851, and in particular the comparison of the number of children born to and living with any particular age group of mothers, has shown this to be the case.

However, when the coalminer families in the same community displayed a more normal age profile, as those in Lower Gornal did by 1891, they still maintained a high level of marital fertility and a mean family size greater than that of the working class population generally. The gender balance of the coalminer population had not changed significantly between 1851 and 1891, and thus one is forced to acknowledge that a purely demographic causation for levels of fertility is insufficient. In the case of Lower Gornal it has been suggested that the socio-economic characteristics of the community, and the ways in which these may change over time, must also be considered as part of an overall explanation. The generally accepted improvement in the overall economic circumstances of the working class in the Black Country by 1891 provides an all too easily available explanation for the continued high fertility and family size demonstrated by the empirical data. However, a two-legged causation model, one of underlying demographic structure tempered by socio-economic change, may still be an insufficient explanation. When some of the possible mechanisms for determining levels of fertility,

and in particular, age of marriage and the participation of women in paid-employment, are examined in more detail, the causation model has to be modified again. The expected outcomes of economic prosperity, a falling age of marriage reflecting perhaps a shorter period of participation in paid employment by women, were not present in the last decade of the nineteenth century in either of the communities studied in this Thesis. The historian is thus forced to suggest other explanations for such unexpected patterns of behaviour, looking for the cultural or sociological attitudes towards both marriage and work prevailing in the communities being studied. Thus it was necessary to add a third leg to the causation model, but it is one which the available empirical data supports only weakly. Thus the empirical data presented in this Thesis has challenged, once again, the notion that social historians can look for grand monocausal explanations for the behaviour of past social groups. Moreover, we can only scrape the surface of the fascinating puzzle of how the elements in the causation model, demography, socio-economic circumstance and cultural norms interacted with each other in the past, and how this interaction changed over time. This Thesis is important for the way in which the location-, occupation- and time- specific analysis of the data has reinforced these notions.

The analysis of the quantitative data has also demonstrated that coalminers, and indeed the working class as a whole in the communities studied, lived essentially in nuclear families of parents and children, and that there was little difference between the coalminers and the rest of the working class population. This pattern of household composition emerged very strongly from the data for 1851, and was reinforced even more strongly by that for 1891, in both Lower Gornal and Cradley. Few coalminer households were headed by widowed miners, while there was an even greater proportion of working class households generally headed by widowed men or women. (1)

The quantitative data revealing family size is difficult to interpret. In the coalminer community of Lower Gornal, in both 1851 and 1891, coalminer family size was greater than amongst the working-class population generally, and the difference had increased by 1891 due to both an increase in the size of coalminer families and a decrease in the size of working class families generally. A fertility model which maintains that an increase in real wages and an improved standard of living, which was certainly the experience of the working class in the Black Country generally in the second half of the nineteenth century, leads to smaller family size, is challenged by such data. The coalminers simply do not fit this pattern of fertility and family size, despite tentative evidence for slightly delayed marriage which would have exerted a downward pressure

on family size. Therefore, their increased marital fertility and corresponding increase in family size, must have been due to demographic differentials perhaps of mortality, or, more likely, differences in sociological norms of fertility and family formation prevailing in the coalminer population compared to those in the working class community as a whole, which, in turn, possibly reflected differences in economic status between the two populations.

In Cradley, where the coalminers were merely one occupational group in a predominantly metal working community, family size was the same as in the rest of the working-class community, but smaller than in Lower Gornal, in both 1851 and 1891. This confirms the hypothesis that there were differences in fertility and in the norms of family formation in communities identified as predominantly coalminer in character, compared to those communities in which coalminers were just one occupational group amongst others. There is no evidence that there were significant differences in either mortality, or in the overall socio-economic status between the two communities in the second half of the nineteenth century, although Lower Gornal was probably a more stable and settled community than Cradley by 1851. Thus one is forced to conclude that coalminers in numbers, in relatively stable communities, did seem to behave differently to the rest of the working class with whom they lived and worked. Where coalminers were in smaller numbers and did not form a distinct socio-occupational group, they seemed to have similar levels of marital fertility and family size to the rest of the working class. An assumption is built into this hypothesis which needs to be challenged by further research, and that is that the ability of an occupational group to emerge with a different socio-cultural pattern distinct from the rest of the working class with whom they lived, is a function of its size within any particular working class community. Comparison of the coalminer population of Lower Gornal with other Black Country communities in which they formed a greater and a lesser proportion of the overall population would test this assumption.

The quantitative data for overall household composition obtained from the two communities studied in this Thesis does not support the Anderson thesis in terms of household sharing, either in the coalminer households or those of the working class generally. If Anderson was maintaining that the amount of sharing with kin which he found to exist in Preston in 1851 was so great that it must have been of importance to those involved, then the conclusions drawn in this Thesis from the household data of Lower Gornal and Cradley do not support such a hypothesis. In both communities, in both 1851 and 1891, there was simply not enough sharing of households to make it significant for the population as a whole. However, if Anderson's argument was that it

was the types of pattern of relationship revealed by his data which made the sharing of households with relatives important, then there is some support from the data in this Thesis for such a hypothesis. The types of pattern of co-residence revealed in this Thesis: sharing with vulnerable individuals or families in critical circumstances; sharing with young relatives; sharing with older parents; and the almost random sharing with seemingly unrelated individuals, do have similarities to those described by Anderson. Whether the motives behind these patterns spring from caring or calculated instrumentality is impossible to determine; but the scarcity of such sharing in the communities studied here would indicate that its importance for the working class population as a whole can be exaggerated. Thus this Thesis has challenged an uncritical acceptance of a current notion of working class social life and in doing so, has helped to sharpen our view of it.

While the empirical data might indicate patterns and changes over time and across communities and occupational groups, it can, of course, tell us little about behavioural attitudes or motive; about personal relationships within the intimate family group or the wider household group; about how decisions concerning the household group were made; about the functions each member of the family had or the obligations each had to the other; and, perhaps most importantly of all, about how the coalminer family, and, indeed, the working-class family as a whole, perceived itself in a period of peaceful change in the second half of the nineteenth century. The social historian is always aware of the warning of historians like Peter Laslett that *"there is little to be gained from recovering the facts about the size and composition of the domestic group unless their influences on behaviour can be gauged"*. (2) Laslett may of course be speaking with a certain amount of irony here since he does in fact make much of such evidence in his own analysis of family life in the early modern age, but it does , nevertheless serve as a warning. The social historian must also be aware of warnings that demographic studies *"average out human experience"*, and thus, by implication, soften our focus on family history. (3) However, in defence of the social historian, it might be pointed out that he or she must, inevitably, work with the 'average' in order to try to make sense of that rich and complex web of individual social experience; and also that all historical focus, by its necessary use of incomplete, fragmentary and partial evidence, long-removed from its creation in time, is inevitably soft. Nor would the present writer go as far as Bill Williamson, who questioned whether we can ever reconstruct the behaviour of people in the past, or whether we can ever make sense of the social reality of people in the past as they would have experienced it. (4) If we took such warnings at face value, then the historian would put down his sources and his pen immediately. The present writer believes that the

social historian must answer Williamson's questions with a tentative *"maybe"* and should then continue to scratch, since no more is possible, at the surface, of those rich, complex, and, of course, fascinating experiences which comprised working-class life in the second half of the nineteenth century.

The present writer has also sought to avoid using attitudinal or cultural factors as explanations of last resort, in the sense of residual explanations when the quantitative data has failed to provide adequate explanation for differences between occupational groups, at different points in time and across different communities. This Thesis has, however, pointed to two important sets of behavioural and cultural attitudes which can help to explain the differences which have emerged from the data. In the first place, in a community like Lower Gornal in the second half of the nineteenth century, the growing awareness among the coalminer population that their increased prosperity, through its impact on levels of infant and child mortality, would allow them to have larger families, might have led to changes in attitudes towards family life. In the second place, the comparison between two different communities presented in this Thesis, has shown that concentrations of miners probably do lead to the emergence of distinct attitudinal and cultural norms governing family formation and household composition. In the community where the miners were more diffused among the population as a whole, these differences do not emerge at all.

The present writer believes this comparison over time and across places has yielded valuable confirmation of, and challenge to, existing research of working-class life in the nineteenth century. In the process of researching and writing this Thesis, the present writer has been ever-conscious of the dichotomy which exists between what could be called a demographic approach to family history, and what Anderson has dubbed the 'sentiments' approach (5); and through the nature of the evidence used, and the scarcity of any other substantial and reliable literary evidence this Thesis has erred, without apology, on the side of the quantifiable demographic approach. The present writer is firmly of the opinion that it has kept faith with its original motivation: to recover those rich vital experiences of ordinary folk which might help to shatter, in however small a way, *"the enormous condescension of posterity"*. (6)

NOTES for CHAPTER SEVEN

1 Strict comparison is, of course, impossible since, by definition, a coalminer household was one headed by a coalminer, and there would have been households in both communities at both points of time which once had coalminers as heads, but had lost them through death by the time of the Census enumeration.

2 **P.Laslett**, *Household and Family in Past Time*, (1972), p.10

3 **D.Vincent**, *Bread, Knowledge and Freedom: A Study of Nineteenth Century Working-Class Autobiography*, (1981), p.59

4 **B.Williamson**, *Class, Culture and Community*, (1982), pp.12-16

5 A phrase used by **M.Anderson** in *Approaches to the History of the Western Family 1500-1914*, (1980)

6 **E.P.Thompson**, *The Making of the English Working Class*, (1980 Pelican edition), p.12

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